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# THE NEW YORKER





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# THE NEW YORKER

OCTOBER 5, 2015

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## CONTRIBUTORS

**WILLIAM FINNEGAN** ("THE MAN WHO WOULDN'T SIT DOWN," P. 40), a staff writer, is the author of "Barbarian Days: A Surfing Life," which was published in July.

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**ALEC WILKINSON** ("SOMETHING BORROWED," P. 26) has been contributing to the magazine since 1980. "The Protest Singer" is one of his many books.

**SCAACHI KOUL** (SHOUTS & MURMURS, P. 33) is a senior writer at BuzzFeed Canada. She is working on her first collection of essays, entitled "The Pursuit of Misery."

**JOHN UPDIKE** (POEM, P. 38), who died in 2009, was a contributor to the magazine for more than fifty years. This poem, written when he was twenty-one, is included in his "Selected Poems," which is due out in October.

**JENNIFER GONNERMAN** ("A DAUGHTER'S DEATH," P. 52) joined *The New Yorker* as a staff writer earlier this year. She is the author of "Life on the Outside: The Prison Odyssey of Elaine Bartlett."

**TIM PARKS** (FICTION, P. 64) has published numerous books, including "Where I'm Reading From," a collection of essays, which came out in May.

**ANWEN CRAWFORD** (POP MUSIC, P. 72) is the author of "Live Through This," a book in Bloomsbury Publishing's 33½ series, about popular music.

**ALEXANDRA SCHWARTZ** (A CRITIC AT LARGE, P. 75) won the 2014 Nona Balakian Citation for Excellence in Reviewing from the National Book Critics Circle.

**PETER DE SÈVE** (COVER) is an illustrator and a character designer for animated films. His work can be seen in "The Little Prince," an upcoming animated feature, based on the book by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

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# THE MAIL

## CAPITAL CASES

Judy Clarke, the loyal opponent of the death penalty who was profiled by Patrick Radden Keefe, is a great attorney, colleague, and friend ("The Worst of the Worst," September 14th). Although she participated in the successful effort to win a life sentence for Zacarias Moussaoui, she did not significantly help in constructing the mitigation case. We served as co-lead counsel for Moussaoui; Clarke was part of the defense team for a six-month period three and a half years before the case went to trial. Her role was limited to early work on competency litigation, which came to bear in the mental-health portion of the larger mitigation case presented at trial. The extraordinary efforts of the lawyers, investigators, and paralegals on the team, along with the courageous testimony of the victim witnesses who testified for the defense, led to Moussaoui's life sentence. It is also worth noting that Clarke's level of investigation into her clients' backgrounds is common practice among competent capital-defense teams. We know many in the capital-defense community, but we don't know people who call her "St. Judy"—no doubt because everyone knows so many others who work tirelessly (without kudos or press coverage) to help their clients' families through generational trauma, abuse, racism, poverty, and mental illness, and to make sense of the tragedy at the heart of these cases. Members of these defense teams have wells of compassion that run just as deep as Clarke's, even if you never learn their names.

Gerald Zerkin, Esq.

Henrico, Va.

Edward B. MacMahon, Jr., Esq.  
Middleburg, Va.

Keefe writes that Clarke referred to Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, who was convicted of murder for detonating homemade bombs at the Boston Marathon, by his nickname Jahar, in order to humanize him. Clarke also tried to have the trial moved out of Boston, where passions were understandably high. It seems dishonest to talk about an accused murderer using the name his

family and friends used, and at the same time try to turn his deed into an abstraction by removing the trial from the city in which he stole loved ones from their families and friends. Clarke says that her clients are "the constant reminder that there but for the grace of God go I." This suggests a wrongheaded belief that every perpetrator of heinous acts must also be viewed as a victim, someone pushed to do evil by experiences he or she has had. I don't buy it.

Seth Wittner  
Henderson, Nev.

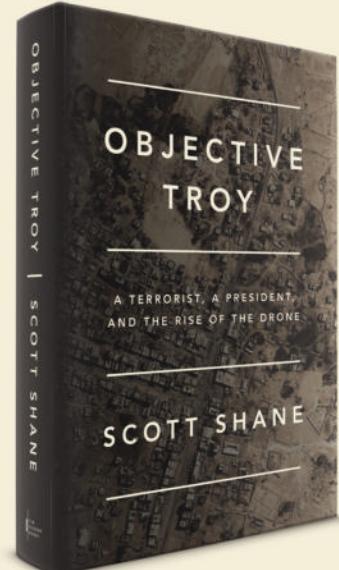
## CONSCIENTIOUS POLICING

I read Ken Auletta's piece about Bill Bratton's policing with interest ("Fixing Broken Windows," September 7th). For more than thirty years, I have served in inner-city parishes in the Bronx, Philadelphia, and Minneapolis. I have very mixed feelings about the broken-windows strategy. I've seen how addressing minor crimes can reduce crime over all while increasing a sense of safety. But frequently, when crime goes down for a while, resources are taken to other areas. Many problems—aging housing, private and public disinvestment, poor city services—require long-term collaboration among police, government agencies, and members of the public. Communities that suffer most from police harassment and abuse often receive no protective policing, period. All too often, patrol officers act more like an occupying army than like a force empowered to serve a neighborhood. As the article mentions, communities know who is breaking the windows, and many people are ready to work with the police to fix them. The police must show their willingness. Otherwise, trust, and young lives, may end up broken beyond repair.

The Reverend Patrick Cabello Hansel  
Minneapolis, Minn.

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to [themail@newyorker.com](mailto:themail@newyorker.com). Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. We regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter or return letters.

# A TERRORIST A PRESIDENT AND THE RISE OF THE DRONE



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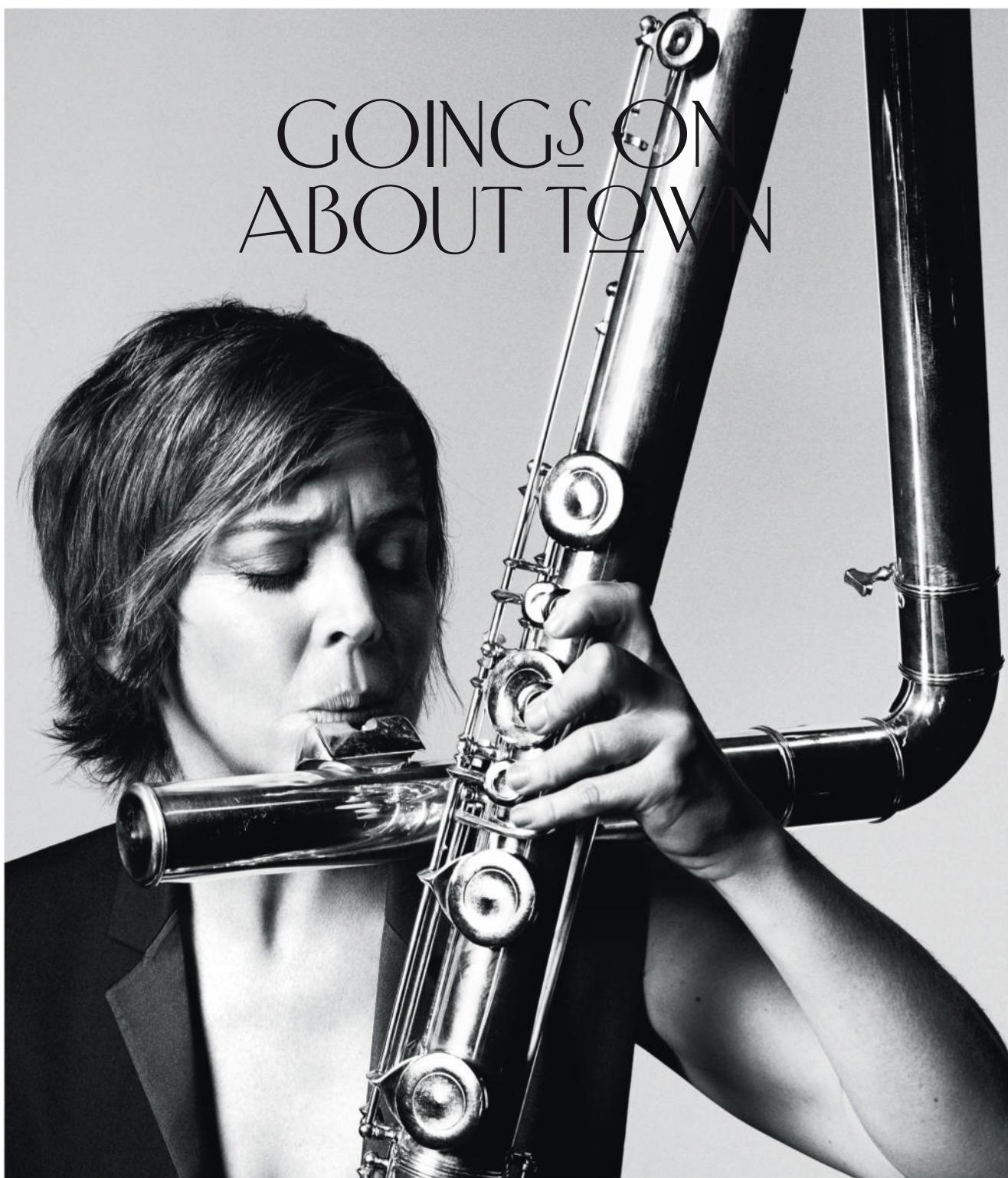
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**AS THE FOUNDER**, co-artistic director, and burning heart and soul of the International Contemporary Ensemble, the flutist Claire Chase is a model for a new generation of American classical musicians—her career embodies entrepreneurship, technical virtuosity, and performance charisma. Chase is also quite serious about leaving a legacy: she is now into year three of “Density 2036,” a twenty-two-year project to commission new works to mark the centenary of Edgard Varèse’s 1936 piece, “Density 21.5,” a bulwark of the solo-flute repertoire. Her three-part engagement at the Kitchen (Sept. 29-Oct. 2) brings back music from the first two years of the project, by such composers as Philip Glass and George Lewis, with brand-new pieces on the final night by Jason Eckardt, Dai Fujikura, and the legendary Pauline Oliveros.

THE THEATRE  
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# THE THEATRE



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### HAMLET IN BED

Rattlestick

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Booth

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Cherry Lane

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Lucille Lortel

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Brooks Atkinson

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Roundabout Underground

## OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

### Barbecue

In a new play by Robert O'Hara ("Bootycandy"), directed by Kent Gash, a group of siblings gather in a park to confront their sister about her drug abuse. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

### Cloud Nine

James Macdonald directs Caryl Churchill's political drama from 1979, set in colonial Africa during the Victorian era and in contemporary London. In previews. Opens Oct. 5. (Atlantic Theatre Company, 336 W. 20th St. 866-811-4111.)

### Dames at Sea

An homage to nineteen-thirties musical comedy, first produced Off Broadway in 1968, with a book and lyrics by George Haimsohn and Robin Miller and music by Jim Wise. Randy Skinner directs. In previews. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

### Eclipsed

Lupita Nyong'o ("12 Years a Slave") stars in Danai Gurira's play, directed by Liesl Tommy, about the captive wives of a rebel officer during Liberia's second civil war. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

### The Gin Game

In D. L. Coburn's Pulitzer Prize-winning play from 1976, directed by Leonard Foglia, James Earl Jones and Cicely Tyson play two nursing-home residents who square off in gin rummy. In previews. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

### The Humans

Joe Mantello directs a drama by Stephen Karam ("Sons of the Prophet"), about a man who brings his family to celebrate Thanksgiving at his daughter's dilapidated apartment. In previews. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

### Kill Floor

LCT3 presents a new play by Abe Koogler, directed by Lila Neugebauer, in which an ex-con (Marin Ireland) finds work at a slaughterhouse and tries to reconnect with her teen-age son, a staunch vegetarian. Previews begin Oct. 3. (Claire Tow, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.)

### Old Times

Clive Owen, Eve Best, and Kelly Reilly star in this enigmatic love triangle by Harold Pinter, directed by Douglas Hodge for the Roundabout

and featuring original music by Thom Yorke. In previews. Opens Oct. 6. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

### On Your Feet!

Jerry Mitchell directs a new bi-musical about the lives and careers of Gloria and Emilio Estefan, with choreography by Sergio Trujillo. Previews begin Oct. 5. (Marquis, Broadway at 46th St. 877-250-2929.)

### The Quare Land

Irish Rep presents John McManus's play, directed by Ciarán O'Reilly, in which an old Irish farmer is visited by a real-estate developer who wants to convert his land into a golf course. In previews. Opens Oct. 1. (DR2, at 103 E. 15th St. 212-727-2737.)

### Ripcord

Marylouise Burke and Holland Taylor star in a new comedy by David Lindsay-Abaire, directed by David Hyde Pierce for Manhattan Theatre Club, about two women in assisted living who are forced to share a room. In previews. (City Center Stage I, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

### 17 Border Crossings

At the Next Wave Festival, the director-performer Thaddeus Phillips presents a travelogue exploring the misadventures of international passage. Sept. 30-Oct. 3. (BAM Fisher, 321 Ashland Pl., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

### Sisters' Follies: Between Two Worlds

The puppeteer Basil Twist stages this musical ghost story, featuring Joey Arias and Julie Atlas Muz as the real-life sisters who founded the Abrons' Playhouse, a century ago, and are now back to haunt it. Previews begin Oct. 1. (Abrons Arts Center, 466 Grand St. 212-352-3101.)

### Sylvia

Annaleigh Ashford, Matthew Broderick, and Julie White star in Daniel Sullivan's revival of the A. R. Gurney comedy, about a New York couple and their dog. Previews begin Oct. 2. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

### Thérèse Raquin

Keira Knightley makes her Broadway début in Helen Edmundson's adaptation of the Émile Zola novel, in which a woman in a loveless marriage enters a torrid and murderous affair with her husband's friend. Evan Cabnet directs the Roundabout production. Previews begin Oct. 1. (Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300.)

### NOW PLAYING

#### Fulfillment

Thomas Bradshaw is a prolific playwright, and part of what makes him interesting is that he writes about black maleness without making it all

about sociology or special pleading. His latest work tells the story of Michael (the sexy and fantastic Gbenga Akinnagbe), a lawyer who buys an expensive apartment in SoHo. Michael tries to ignore the racist world, which he copes with by consuming large quantities of liquor, sometimes in the company of his girlfriend, Sarah (the appropriately lewd Susannah Flood), who helps him get sober—at least for a time. Despite Sarah's patience, she's as self-interested as the guys Michael surrounds himself with, and when his twisted upstairs neighbor, Simon (Christian Conn, good and nasty), makes Michael's urban dream a nightmare we see how little truth or love lies in anyone's heart. Well directed by Ethan McSweeney, the piece is not one of Bradshaw's best—it's too schematic—but it's still more upsetting and hilarious than many of his contemporaries' more popular work. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

### A Midsummer Night's Dream

With just five performers in workout wear playing all the lovers, fairies, and mechanicals, Eric Tucker's production, which first appeared at the Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival, is a cavalcade of actorly invention. The show seems to take inspiration from Nick Bottom's invitation to "rehearse most obscenely and courageously." That's no malapropism here. On a bare stage resembling a black-lit sandbox, the energetic quintet deploys a giddy array of accents, walks, and gestures, taking on countless roles—a style Tucker favors for his own Bedlam theatre company. A lot of this works surprisingly, rollickingly well, including Jason O'Connell's Puck, rendered as a menacing housefly. Some of it doesn't. (Hippolyta is a werewolf?) Tucker can't seem to tell the difference. A little pruning would make these forest antics more enchanting and less exhausting. (Pearl, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-563-9261.)

### Sommerfugl

This new play, based on the life of Lili Elbe, a Danish painter who in 1930 was one of the first people ever to undergo sex-reassignment surgery, has a happy tendency to conjure the spirit of Christopher Isherwood, both in its vivid evocation of Europe between the wars and in its characters' bittersweet yearning for the fullness of life. Bixby Elliot's script, as directed by Stephen Brackett, smartly skips the plodding rhythms of biography in favor of the tension and immediacy of scene. The cast of four is magnetic: Aubyn Philabaum lends fresh specificity to the familiar role of the patient and beleaguered wife, Bernardo Cubria energizes every moment he's given, Michelle David shifts impeccably among several quick but effective roles, and Wayne Wilcox creates a Lili who is forever elusive and yet impossible to stop watching. (4th Street Theatre, at 83 E. 4th St. 866-811-4111.)

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# X MOVIES

## OPENING FREEHELD

In this drama, Julianne Moore plays a woman who is dying of cancer and fighting for the right to leave her benefits to her partner (Ellen Page). Directed by Peter Sollett. Opening Oct. 2. (In limited release.)

## HE NAMED ME MALALA

A documentary about Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani girl who was attacked by the Taliban in 2012 for attending school. Directed by Davis Guggenheim. Opening Oct. 2. (In limited release.)

## THE MARTIAN

A science-fiction thriller, directed by Ridley Scott, about an astronaut (Matt Damon) who is marooned on Mars and tries to survive alone. Co-starring Jessica Chastain. Opening Oct. 2. (In wide release.)

## SHOUT GLADI GLADI

A documentary about activists working in Africa to repair obstetric fistulas. Directed by Adam Friedman and Iain Kennedy. Opening Oct. 2. (In limited release.)

## TAXI

In this docudrama, the Iranian director Jafar Panahi, banned from filmmaking, drives a cab in Tehran and talks with his passengers. In Farsi. Opening Oct. 2. (In limited release.)

## THE WALK

Robert Zemeckis directed this 3-D docudrama, about Philippe Petit's 1974 walk on a high wire between the two towers of the World Trade Center. Starring Joseph Gordon-Levitt and Ben Kingsley. Opening Sept. 30. (In wide release.)



## MOVIE OF THE WEEK

A video discussion of Gregory La Cava's "Unfinished Business," from 1941, in our digital edition and online.

## NOW PLAYING

### Black Girl

Diouana (M'bissine Thérèse Diop), a young woman from Senegal, is brought to the South of France to work as a nanny and maid for the family of a young French bureaucrat (Robert Fontaine) and his wife (Anne-Marie Jelinek). When they mistreat her, the desperate Diouana is ready for even the most extreme means of escape. Ousmane Sembène—in his first feature film, from 1966, which is also widely considered the first feature made by an African—distills a vast range of historical crises and frustrated ambitions into this intimate, straightforwardly realistic drama. His images have the cool fury of an indictment; his ironic views of the French landscape and his shrewd New Wave citations suggest that beneath the natural and cultural charms of France lurks a bilious racism linked to colonialism. And the flashbacks to Diouana's earlier days in the capital city of Dakar depict the futility of nominal independence from France without an authentic African political and artistic revival—for which this small-scale film was a giant step. In French.—Richard Brody (New York Film Festival; Oct. 6.)

### Black Mass

Bowing to the principle that there can never be enough films about criminal fraternities, Scott Cooper's new movie takes us to Boston in the nineteen-seventies, where James Bulger (Johnny Depp), known as Whitey, runs the Winter Hill Gang. He holds sway for almost twenty years, and in that time he grows dangerously close to the F.B.I., for whom he becomes (though he would never use the word) a rat. In return, the agency—in particular an agent named John Connolly (Joel Edgerton), who hails from the same neighborhood—gives him all the leeway that he needs. The movie is a demonstration of power, with brawny roles for Jesse Plemons and Rory Cochrane, as Whitey's sidekicks, and a sly turn from Benedict Cumberbatch, as his brother, a state senator, no less. But much of the drama seems to occur in a vacuum, with nobody filling the rooms and the streets except gangsters and lawmen, as if their pacts and standoffs were an elaborate game; the result is rarely as frightening as it hopes to be. Depp, tricked out with blue eyes and straw-pale hair, throws everything at the leading role, but are we watching a warped force of nature, as was certainly the

case with the real Bulger, or an acting master class? With Julianne Nicholson and Dakota Johnson.—Anthony Lane (Reviewed in our issue of 9/28/15.) (In wide release.)

### Everest

Since his débüt film, the spirited and lusty "101 Reykjavík" (2000), the Icelandic director Baltasar Kormákur has come a long way. Specifically, he has gone upward—into higher budgets and grander themes, and now to the roof of the world. Most of his new movie takes place on and around the mountain of the title, where two groups of climbers, one led by Rob Hall (Jason Clarke) and the other by Scott Fischer (Jake Gyllenhaal), join forces in an attempt on the summit. Against them is a gathering storm, a shrinking window of time, and the fact that most of the mountaineers are paying customers who will settle for nothing less than a view from the top. The vertiginous viewers may want to close their eyes as the heights and depths, rendered yet more pitiless by 3-D, begin to stretch and yawn. The cast, which includes John Hawkes, Josh Brolin, Emily Watson, Keira Knightley, Sam Worthington, and Robin Wright, could hardly be stronger, yet that very strength compounds the feeling that, however implacable the icy blasts of the film, and however stirring its account of human endurance, we are never quite sure where the heart of the story lies.—A.L. (9/28/15) (In wide release.)

### In the Shadow of Women

In Philippe Garrel's new drama, the clenched anguish of dual romantic triangles is raised to lyrical grandeur by an infusion of art and history. A thirty-something couple in Paris, Pierre (Stanislas Merhar) and Manon (Clotilde Courau), share poverty in harmony; Pierre is a documentary filmmaker, Manon is his editor, and they're making a film about the French Resistance. While doing archival research, Pierre meets Elisabeth (Léna Paugam), a graduate student in history, with whom he begins a sexually intense relationship; Manon, sensing Pierre's remoteness, has an affair with an earnest young businessman named Fédrin (Mounir Margoum), and their marital crisis also becomes a cinematic one. Garrel puts the past to work in the present tense, depicting Pierre and Manon beside elderly Second World War veterans and ancient Parisian buildings,

while a novelistic voice-over analyzes the action with keen psychological insight. In the high-contrast, black-and-white, wide-screen images, Garrel captures creative and erotic passions with a spontaneous classicism and a monumental poise. In French.—R.B. (New York Film Festival; Oct. 6-7.)

### The Intern

This earnest, effusive haut-bourgeois fantasy, by the writer and director Nancy Meyers, runs roughshod over rational skepticism with the force of her life experience. It's set in the overlap of two generations of Brooklyn businesspeople. Jules (Anne Hathaway) has built an Internet start-up from zero to booming in eighteen months, but the pace of her passionately hands-on management style is straining her marriage to Matt (Anders Holm), a stay-at-home dad. Into Jules's stylishly renovated Red Hook offices skips a fairy godfather named Ben (Robert De Niro), a retired executive and lonely widower who arrives as one of the company's "senior interns." Jules, under pressure from investors to yield control of the company, increasingly relies on the wise, discreet, and admiring volunteer, who becomes a key presence in her business and her household alike. For all the nostalgic riffs about styles and virtues forged before the Age of Aquarius, the movie's real subject is the sentimental union of seeming enemies, the disruptive young entrepreneur and the old-school company man. Meyers, an insider's insider, dispenses her vision of feminism—and of independence—via the man in the gray flannel suit.—R.B. (In wide release.)

### 99 Homes

A simplistic but stirring morality play centered on the pressure point of the savings-and-loan crisis. Michael Shannon plays the Devil incarnate—Rick Carver, a Realtor in Orlando, Florida, who brings his own team of movers along with the police so that he can evict residents and remove their belongings in one trip in order to resell their houses at a profit. Dennis Nash (Andrew Garfield), a construction worker who lives with his mother (Laura Dern) and young son (Noah Lomax), gets evicted by Rick, but also gets recruited by him to assist him in the foreclosure racket; hoping to earn back his house, Dennis accepts the Faustian bargain. Rick is soon revealed to be an actual criminal with elaborate schemes of theft and fraud,

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but his swagger, bravado, chicanery, and varieties of hedonism mark his villainy even more overtly than his actions do. The sympathies of any sane viewer are locked in from the start; most of the movie is sheer emotional overkill. The director, Ramin Bahrani, admits of no ambiguity, but, despite his apparent intentions, his depiction of real-estate scams is more engaging than the drama. The Devil gets the best lines.—R.B. (In limited release.)

#### Pawn Sacrifice

A flawed yet entertaining docudrama about an irresistible subject: the 1972 world-championship chess match between Bobby Fischer (played by Tobey Maguire) and Boris Spassky (Liev Schreiber). The movie starts with a dramatic moment at the tournament site in Reykjavík—Fischer's nonappearance for the second game. The ensuing flashbacks show Fischer's childhood in Brooklyn, where he was raised by a single mother (Robin Weigert) who was an active Communist and who aroused McCarthyite snooping, and his subsequent rise through a chess establishment that treated him with indifference and even hostility. Obsessed with wresting the championship from Soviet players, Fischer fears K.G.B. plots; ultimately, psychotic delusions take hold of his personality, but not before he wins the championship. The lawyer Paul Marshall (Michael Stuhlbarg) works behind the scenes to get covert government aid for Fischer; the chess master and priest William Lombardy (Peter Sarsgaard) helps Fischer prepare for the match while admiring his artistry with a connoisseur's eye. The drama, directed by Edward Zwick, takes liberties with

the story and shears off some noteworthy details, but despite the rigid yet slapdash filmmaking the movie conveys the fascination and mystery of a tormented genius at work.—R.B. (In wide release.)

#### Sicario

A young F.B.I. agent, Kate Macer (Emily Blunt), based at the frontier between America and Mexico, joins a new outfit that's devoted to nailing the men who run the drug cartels. The team, which includes the cheerful Matt (Josh Brolin, in flip-flops) and the more mournful Alejandro (Benicio Del Toro), appears to have free rein—much to the dismay of Kate, who cleaves to the rule of law. Many blundering and noisy thrillers have been forged from such a setup, but the director here is Denis Villeneuve, and so the mood, even during exchanges of gunfire, is never less than ominous and fraught. Whether it suits Blunt, with her natural play of wit, is open to question, whereas Del Toro, allowing us only glimpses of his character's compulsions, thrives amid the gloom. The set pieces are carefully parcelled out: a shootout in a traffic jam, a dark descent into a border tunnel, and the discovery, inside an ordinary house, of corpses filling the walls. Anybody hoping for good news from the front line of the drug wars should look elsewhere. The director of photography is Roger Deakins: a recommendation in itself.—A.L. (9/21/15) (In wide release.)

#### Sleeping with Other People

This romantic comedy delivers bland and familiar substance in a peculiar package. In college, the near-strangers

Lainey (Alison Brie) and Jake (Jason Sudeikis) lose their virginity to each other and then fall quickly out of touch. Twelve years later, they live in New York; she's a kindergarten teacher, he's a tech-start-up guy, and they reconnect by chance while leaving a group meeting for sex addicts. Lainey and Jake become close friends, supporting each other's efforts to avoid sex, even while it's obvious to viewers that they're falling in love. What Lainey and Jake think is never made clear; the director and writer, Lesley Headland, doesn't get close enough to find out. The premise prompts much talk about sex, most of which is written in screenwriterese, awaiting punctuation by a laugh track. Yet there's pathos in Lainey's disastrous long-term affair with a gynecologist (Adam Scott), and a scene in which Jake teaches Lainey to masturbate suggests a psychodramatic intensity that Headland doesn't reach elsewhere.—R.B. (In limited release.)

#### Used Cars

This classic screwball fantasy is like a more restless and visually high-spirited version of the W. C. Fields pictures. The director, Robert Zemeckis, developed a homegrown surrealism out of earlier American slapstick routines. Set in the world of competing used-car dealers in the booming Southwest, this picture has a wonderful, energetic heartlessness; it's an American tall-tale movie in a Pop-art form. Kurt Russell is the hero—a fast-talking supersalesman who's so rambunctiously, ingeniously crooked that he's a standout—a star in the world of the mendacious. With Jack Pwarden, as twin brothers who

run rival lots across the street from each other, and David L. Lander and Michael McKean, as the electronic wizards who devise a way to cut into a Presidential address with used-car commercials. Released in 1980.—Pauline Kael (MOMA; Oct. 1 and Oct. 5.)

#### The Visit

For all its intelligence and craft, M. Night Shyamalan's foray into found-footage horror has the feeling of homework done well. Its fifteen-year-old protagonist, Becca (Olivia DeJonge), a precocious documentary filmmaker, and her thirteen-year-old brother, Tyler (Ed Oxenbould), a nerdy rapper, leave their home in Philadelphia to spend a week in rural Pennsylvania with their maternal grandparents, whom they've never met. The teens' mother (Kathryn Hahn) eloped at nineteen and never saw her parents again; the movie's found footage is Becca's record of the sentimental trip. But when the teens meet Nana (Deanna Dunagan) and Pop Pop (Peter McRobbie), they soon find things amiss. The fearsome doings owe nothing to the supernatural; rather, Pop Pop's furtive visits to a lonely shed, Nana's nocturnal wanderings, and an odd game of hide-and-seek lead to the children's mounting terror. Meanwhile, Becca, armed with rote theories, continues to make her film. It delivers a few jolts and a few tense laughs, but Shyamalan stays on the surface and at a distance; his script is airtight and, despite deft camera work by Maryse Alberti, he displays no documentary curiosity of his own.—R.B. (In wide release.)



#### New York City Ballet

On Sept. 30, at its fashion-themed fall gala, the company unveils four new works by bright young men of ballet, all in their twenties. One is by Justin Peck, the house choreographer, a seemingly bottomless well of ingenious, quicksilver movement. Troy Schumacher, who leads his own chamber group (BalletCollective), has collaborated with the young alternative-classical composer Ellis Ludwig-Leone. Myles Thatcher, a dancer with San Francisco Ballet, will use the jaunty first movement of a piano quartet by the British

composer William Walton. Robert Binet, now the choreographic associate at the National Ballet of Canada, has chosen the rippling piano music of Ravel. • Sept. 30 at 7 (gala): new Thatcher, new Binet, new Schumacher, new Peck, and "Thou Swell." • Oct. 1 and Oct. 6 at 7:30 and Oct. 3 at 8: "Liebeslieder Walzer" and "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3." • Oct. 2 at 8, Oct. 3 at 2, and Oct. 4 at 3: "Ash," "Sonatas and Interludes," "Tarantella," "Rodeo: Four Dance Episodes," and "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue." (David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. Through Oct. 18.)

#### "Crossing the Line"

The French Institute Alliance Française's festival continues with two dance programs at New York Live Arts, a co-presenter. In "Lives," the Iranian-born performer Ali Moini attaches himself to a spiderweb of strings in an attempt to elucidate the multiple selves that can coexist in any one person. In "Folk-S, Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?" by the Italian choreographer Alessandro Sciarroni, the stomping and self-slapping of the *schuhplattler*, a folk dance of Tyrol and Bavaria, provides material for minimalist repetitions. (219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Sept. 29-Oct. 3.)

#### Batsheva—the Young Ensemble

Eccentric, viscerally exciting, and often organized into striking but self-contained segments, the choreography of Ohad Naharin lends itself uncommonly well to exception. Since 2000, the Batsheva Dance Company, which Naharin has directed since

1990, has toured an ever-changing greatest-hits collection called "Decadance," which is pretty much fail-safe. Here the fresh and fired-up members of the junior troupe take a crack at the latest version. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Sept. 29-Oct. 4.)

#### Patricia Ibáñez and Abel Harana

"Memoria Antigua" ("Ancient Memory") sounds like the title of a show that respects the past, and it is. These two flamenco dancers from Spain are traditionalists, and along with the customary virtues of musicality and passion their duet program has the added attraction of reviving some rarer regional forms of flamenco song and dance. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. Sept. 30.)

#### James Thierrée / "Tabac Rouge"

Thierrée, who grew up in a family of circus performers and artists—he

is the grandson of Charlie Chaplin—builds dreamlike panoramas in which human foibles are expressed through a mix of mime, acrobatics, and dance. Imagine a world in which Pina Bausch and MOMIX meet, populated by lost souls who pick their way through a landscape littered with strange, antiquated machines. His new show, heavier on dance than previous efforts, explores the dynamics of power. (BAM's Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Sept. 30-Oct. 4.)

#### Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes

The Canadian puppeteer Ronnie Burkett constructs his own puppets, which are beautiful, detailed, and strangely expressive. His piece "The Daisy Theatre" is inspired by subversive underground puppet shows that took place in Prague—a puppet-obsessed city—during the Nazi occupation. (There's a saying that daisies can grow in the dark.) Loosely strung together, the vignettes are improvisational, bawdy at times, and funny and poignant in equal measure. (Baryshnikov Arts Center, 450 W. 37th St. 866-811-4111. Sept. 30-Oct. 3. Through Oct. 10.)

#### Fall for Dance Festival

The understandably popular festival offers five distinct programs, each featuring four different companies, each at the unbeatable price of fifteen dollars. What makes the experience so fun—and sometimes frustrating—is the randomness of the mashups: tap meets experimental dance; ballet meets *malambo* (a folkloric dance from Argentina); Brazilian hip-hop meets classic American modern dance. A few of the highlights this year: Miami City Ballet, the British ballet virtuoso turned tapper Steven McRae, the Rio-based Companhia Urbana de Dança, and the irrepressible young flamenco dancer Jesús Carmona. See [nycitycenter.org](http://nycitycenter.org) for programs. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Sept. 30-Oct. 3 and Oct. 6. Through Oct. 11.)

#### New York Theatre Ballet

Performing in its new home, the chamber troupe seems happy. This program, a customary blend of new, classic, and nearly forgotten material, includes Merce Cunningham's 1964 trio "Cross Currents," a suite of Broadway dances by Agnes de Mille, and "Two Timing," David Parker's recent experiment in applying pointe work to Steve Reich's "Clapping Music." The curio is "PiR2," a 1961 parody of Balanchinian modernism, set to a Varèse electronic score, by the once beloved and now obscure ballerina and choreographer Lois Bewley. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's Church In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 866-811-4111. Oct. 1-3.)

# CLASSICAL MUSIC



## DUST BOWL

*Musicians get their hands dirty at Brooklyn's National Sawdust.*

BEFORE THE TURN OF THE CENTURY, there were two basic models for classical-music venues in New York: the concert hall (read Carnegie's Stern Auditorium, or its little brother, Weill Recital Hall) and the alternative space (such as the Kitchen, the kind of place that offered opportunities to musicians that venues like Carnegie had little use for). Then Carnegie, in 2003, opened up Zankel Hall, a flexible midsized venue with a relatively relaxed ambience, and the traditional duopoly suddenly seemed outdated.

Enter the kids. (Le) Poisson Rouge, which opened in 2008, found success presenting all sorts of music in a club-style space on a for-profit basis. Then in 2013 came SubCulture, also run as a business, which has struggled financially despite besting its older competitor in its warm acoustics and living-room-style intimacy. Now a new Brooklyn space, National Sawdust, gets into the game, opening in Williamsburg on Oct. 1. Unlike its recent predecessors, it will operate proudly as a nonprofit, which will allow the creative process to come first.

"What kind of financial seed of support would I have needed in my twenties?" asks Paola Prestini, the dynamic composer and entrepreneur who is National Sawdust's creative and executive director. The thirteen-thousand-square-foot space, a century-old former sawdust factory that has been radically reimagined by the Brooklyn-based architects of Bureau V, will serve simultaneously as concert hall, rehearsal room, record studio, and arts incubator, giving young musicians commissioning support and mentoring opportunities. What makes this all possible is a new financial model instigated by the venue's founder, Kevin Dolan; he's put together a team of "philanthropic investors," who will co-own the building and benefit as it appreciates in value—essentially investing and donating at the same time. It's also a great "insurance policy," as Prestini calls it, for an initial month of concerts of breathtaking ambition and range. After an all-star opening night that features such influential musicians as Nico Muhly, Chris Thile, and Nadia Sirota, the venue will present festivals devoted to the music of John Zorn and Terry Riley, concerts by such acclaimed soloists as the pianist Alessio Bax and the violinist Johnny Gandelsman, an evening with the Inuit throat singer Tanya Tagaq, and the world première of Keeril Makan's "Persona," an operatic adaptation of the Ingmar Bergman film.

—Russell Platt

## OPERA

### Metropolitan Opera

With the exception of an ornately carved headboard that could have come from a Rialto bed-and-breakfast, there isn't a trace of Venetian imagery in Bartlett Sher's abstract, pseudo-nineteenth-century production of Verdi's *"Otello,"* which opened the season on Sept. 21. Add to that Sher's unimaginative handling of crowd scenes and you wind up with a show that only warms up as the jealous Moor's blood begins to boil—but once it does, it crackles with malignant energy. (On opening night, not until the second half did Yannick Nézet-Séguin's conducting begin to acquire texture and definition.) The singing of Aleksandrs Antonenko, in the punishing title role, continually gains conviction, but the performances of Sonya Yoncheva, who brings a gently burnished voice to the role of Desdemona, and Željko Lučić, a subtly menacing Iago, are a constant source of pleasure. (Oct. 2 at 8 and Oct. 6 at 7:30.) • **Also playing:** The soprano Christine Goerke, a powerhouse interpreter of Wagner and Strauss, takes the formidable title role in Puccini's Chinese fairy tale, *"Turandot,"* leading a cast that also features Marcelo Álvarez and Hibla Gerzmava; Paolo Carignani conducts. (Sept. 30 at 7:30 and Oct. 3 at 8.) • Donizetti never intended for his "Tudor Queen" operas to constitute a trilogy, but after Beverly Sills pulled off the feat of performing all three at New York City Opera, in the nineteen-seventies, a new tradition was born. Sondra Radvanovsky, a soprano of formidable gifts, brings the grouping back to New York for the first time since then, starting with a run of *"Anna Bolena,"* the composer's sympathetic portrait of Henry VIII's second wife. Jamie Barton, Stephen Costello, and Ildar Abdrazakov make up the talented supporting cast; Marco Armiliato. (Oct. 1 and Oct. 5 at 7:30.) • Early in her career, the superstar soprano Anna Netrebko traded on her considerable glamour and impetuous stage presence; now she continues her recent campaign to be taken seriously as a mature artist with *"Il Trovatore."* Filling out the quartet of challenging principal roles is a team of A-list Verdians: the tenor Yonghoon Lee, the mezzo-soprano Dolora Zajick, and the beloved baritone Dmitri Hvorostovsky, who makes a special appearance at the Met amid ongoing treatment for a brain tumor. Marco Armiliato conducts Verdi's high-octane drama in David McVicar's straightforward production. (Oct. 3 at 1.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

## ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

### New York Philharmonic

Alan Gilbert and the composer Marc Neikrug have a shared history with the vibrant musical life of Santa Fe: Neikrug is the longtime artistic director of the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, while Gilbert spent several summers conducting at Santa Fe Opera. This week, Gilbert conducts the Philharmonic in the world première of Neikrug's *"Canta-Concerto,"* a daring work in which the soloist (the compelling mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke) sings no text, communicating only in pure syllables and sound. The piece is bookended by two masterworks by Brahms, the "Tragic Overture" and the formidable Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-Flat Major (a longtime specialty of Emanuel Ax). (Oct. 1 at 7:30 and Oct. 3 at 8. Note: The concerts are preceded by a program on Sept. 30 at 8, featuring the Brahms concerto and Beethoven's Seventh Symphony.) (David Geffen Hall. 212-875-5656.)

## RECITALS

### Da Capo Chamber Players

Commencing its forty-fifth season, the stalwart ensemble honors the double centenary of Milton

Babbitt and George Perle, two uncompromisingly modernist composers with whom the group enjoyed a long collaboration. Joined by the conductor David Fulmer, the musicians perform Babbitt's "When Shall We Three Meet Again?" and Perle's "Sonata a Quattro" and "Nightsong" (both written for Da Capo) alongside works by the like-minded Fred Lerdahl, Jason Eckardt, and Fulmer. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Oct. 1 at 8.)

### Music at the Metropolitan Museum

Brilliant young talent takes the spotlight at the museum this weekend. Oct. 2 at 7: When the Chiara String Quartet started coming up the ranks a decade ago, it was known for its versatility. Recently, however, its members have embraced the classics with especial intimacy—playing entire pieces from memory, without music. This concert features the three string quartets by Johannes Brahms, works tortuously balanced between classical control and Romantic abandon. (Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium.) • Oct. 3 at 7: As a pendant to its dazzling exhibition devoted to the portraiture of John Singer Sargent, the musicians of Decoda, for whom versatility is a watchword, put together a unique program of incisive musical portraits by such composers as Britten, Ravel, Schubert, Ned Rorem, Aaron Jay Kernis ("Mozart en Route"), David Lang, and Charles Mingus ("Self-Portrait in Three Colors"). (Vélez Blanco Patio.) (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949.)

### Glass Farm Ensemble

The pianist Yvonne Troxler runs this enduring ensemble, which offers programs of modern

Swiss music interleaved with compositions by outstanding musicians from America and the rest of Europe. Recent works by Alfred Zimmerlin and Balz Trümpy ("Im Labryinth") will be performed alongside pieces by the masters Kaija Saariaho, Salvatore Sciarrino ("D'un Faune"), and the late Jonathan Harvey. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Oct. 2 at 7:30.)

### "Music Before 1800" Series:

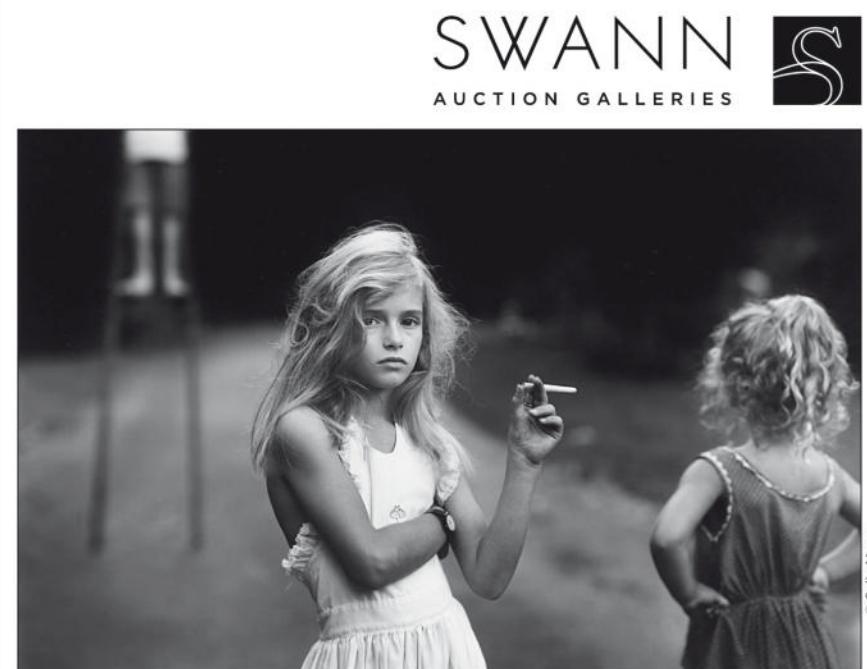
#### "A Path to Enlightenment"

At Corpus Christi Church, in Upper Manhattan, the Baroque supergroup Rebel presents an introspective concert-cum-spoken-word event that explores the ideals behind the intellectual transformation of eighteenth-century Europe. The musical responses are by three Bachs (C.P.E., J.C., and, of course, J.S.), Pierre-Gabriel Buffardin, Jean-Marie Leclair, and Jean-Frédéric Edelmann, interspersed with readings (by the actor Paul Hecht) from the philosophical works of Voltaire, Rousseau, Kant, Herder, and Burke. (529 W. 121st St. 212-666-9266. Oct. 4 at 4.)

### Music at the Frick Collection:

#### Pallade Musica

The young and admired Baroque ensemble (of strings, harpsichord, and flute) from Montreal makes its New York débüt in the Frick's golden-domed music room, performing quartets and sonatas by Telemann, Lully, Forqueray, and others. (1 E. 70th St. 212-547-0715. Oct. 4 at 5.)



Sally Mann, *Candy Cigarette* (detail), silver print, 1989. Estimate \$100,000 to \$150,000.

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# NIGHT LIFE



## OUTSIDER ARTIST

*Destroyer's tenth album is the best of his career.*

DAN BEJAR, AN ENIGMATIC and prolific singer-songwriter from Canada who has, since the mid-nineties, performed as Destroyer, has a reputation as a killjoy, and a curmudgeon. “That comes from me shooting off my mouth in interviews,” he told me last month, sitting up in bed by a window overlooking the Strathcona section of Vancouver, British Columbia, where he lives with his wife and their young daughter. This spring, he made an offhandedly dismissive remark about Taylor Swift—God forbid!—and was blasted by a disproportionately vocal faction of the online critical establishment that was quick to defend pop music’s very own one per cent. “I should never open my mouth,” he said quietly, and sighed with resignation. “I guess I didn’t realize how much had changed in North America, or that pop music had become such a loaded, political thing.”

Bejar, forty-two, just released his tenth record, a sumptuous double LP on Merge Records.

It is the best of his career, the work of a man with road-earned songwriting chops and a font of knowledge about peripheral, outlier purveyors of sophisticated, adult-oriented pop and jazz of the seventies and eighties, like Bryan Ferry, Miles Davis, and Lucio Battisti. Bejar’s previous records found him perfecting a voice that is truly distinct in contemporary rock, committing to eclecticism, trying on glam rock, outsider folk, even spaced-out disco. What carried them all was a certain economy of form, his undeniable wit, and his trademark devastating, often bleak lyrics. For the new album, in thirteen lush tracks, Bejar maintains a deliciously melancholic atmosphere, melting between austere piano ballads and keyed-up, E Street-style benders—in his words, “Destroyer at the Sands.” The title, “Poison Season,” reflects Bejar’s persona. Even when the music swells around him, he continues to mutter toxic, self-annihilating prose, as if he were caught in the spotlight with his back to the audience: “Baby, it’s dumb. Look what I’ve become—scum” and “I think I used to be more fun . . . Oh shit, here comes the sun.”

If the record sounds a pinch too precious, the eight-piece live act ought to work as a fine antidote. “We’re going out as a bona-fide jazz-rock band,” he said. “When we’re really pushing ourselves, there’s no way a stage isn’t better than a studio.” Then, with the disarming confidence that makes his music so good, he quipped, “It’s like that with every band, and always will be, and that will never change.” Destroyer comes to Webster Hall on Sunday, Oct. 4.

—Benjamin Shapiro

## ROCK AND POP

*Musicians and night-club proprietors lead complicated lives; it's advisable to check in advance to confirm engagements.*

### Autechre

This British duo has been crafting artful, inventive electronica since forming in Manchester, nearly thirty years ago. Early on, Autechre broke free from the conventions of dance music by melding unpredictable beats with sounds forged from algorithms, digital effects, and field recordings that they brought to life by improvising. "Exai," the band's most recent full-length record, which clocks in at more than two hours, introduced another new world of unclassifiable sounds. Despite their unfamiliarity, they often evoke ancient emotions such as fear and euphoria. The band comes to the Brooklyn Masonic Temple on its first American tour since 2008. (317 Clermont Ave., Brooklyn. 718-638-1256. Oct. 3.)

### Modern Sky Festival NYC

In 2007, this unique festival germinated from a boutique Beijing label, quickly becoming an industry giant in China with a simple formula: encourage cross-pollination with Western artists. The formula proved successful; last year Modern Sky expanded to the U.S. for the first time, and this week it returns for a one-day engagement in Central Park. True to mission, the day will spotlight some of China's brightest rock talent. The highlight is **Hedgehog**, an alt-rock trio known for a pint-size female drummer named Atom, who strikes hard enough to give Dave Grohl a run for his money. Other Chinese groups—the pop punks **New Pants**, the folksinger **Song Dongye**, and the hard rockers **Miserable Faith**—will be joined by a handful of Western heavyweights, including **Yoko Ono Plastic Ono Band** and **Gang of Four**. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 69th St. summerstage.org. Oct. 4.)

### Tame Impala

If Jim Morrison could come back and see what kind of derivative pap gets trotted out as psych rock these days, he'd probably burn his gold records. Perhaps that's why Kevin Parker, who fronts this Australian quintet, has intentionally outgrown that tired idiom on his newest album, "Currents." The latest crop of songs expands his oeuvre into groove-oriented electro-pop and disco rave-ups, music that works best with the kind of crystal-clear production that was absent on his early work. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 212-247-4777. Oct. 6.)

### The Vibrators

Originally a quartet, this London band, formed in 1976, was in the first wave of British punk. Led by the wide-eyed, ashen-faced Ian (Knox) Carnochan, they were on the bill with the Sex Pistols at the 100 Club, had a Top 40 hit with "Automatic Lover," and were an inspiration for other bands: Stiff Little Fingers took their name from a Vibrators song. Now a trio, the group is led from behind the kit of John (Eddie) Edwards, the original drummer, and it still brings the power and energy of its origins. With two local bands, the **Bullys** and **Twin Guns**. (Bowery Electric, 327 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-0228. Oct. 3.)

### Wavves

Since his major-label début, two years ago, Nathan Williams, the scrappy front man of this San Diego outfit, has proved he's got a limitless number of crunchy, keyed-up pop-punk songs in his head. This summer, he issued a series of angry tweets against his label, Warner Bros., over its release

plan for his new record, but, thankfully, the dispute seems to have been settled, and the album, "V," will finally be released, on Oct. 2. He's in town to celebrate, enlisting the Chicago garage rockers **Twin Peaks** as the opening act. (Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl. 212-777-6800. Oct. 6.)

### Celebrating the Music of Bill Withers

A tribute to one of the greatest soul singers of the seventies. Raised in Beckley, West Virginia, Withers spent nearly a decade in the Navy before moving to Los Angeles to pursue his music career. At thirty-one, while working as a toilet-seat fabricator for 747s, he recorded his first hit, "Ain't No Sunshine." Since then, he's gone on to influence countless musicians, many of whom will be on hand at Carnegie Hall, to celebrate the seventy-seven-year-old top-liner. Guests include **D'Angelo**, **Dr. John**, **Ed Sheeran**, and Withers himself, although the extent of his involvement has not yet been revealed. (Seventh Ave. at 57th St. 212-247-7800. Oct. 1.)

## JAZZ AND STANDARDS

### Celebrating George Wein at 90

The survival of jazz, and many other American musical genres, would be unthinkable without the visionary promoter **George Wein**, the man who basically put the modern music festival on the map. A proficient and enthusiastic pianist, Wein will celebrate his ninetieth birthday in the company of multigenerational players, including the trumpeter **Randy Brecker**, the bassist **Jay Leonhart**, and the pianist **Frank Kimbrough**. (Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola, Broadway at 60th St. 212-258-9595. Oct. 2.)

### George Coleman with Eric Alexander

The original iteration of "Tenor Madness" was the celebrated 1956 encounter between the saxophonists Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane. The combatants this time around, the veteran Coleman and his acolyte Alexander, may not be as prestigious, but they remain bop-based tenor titans to be reckoned with. (Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. 212-576-2232. Oct. 1-4.)

### Libby York Quartet

"Memoir," Libby York's most recent recording, is a telling reflection of a gifted and experienced singer whose subtle manner may have kept her from greater popular acclaim. A warm tone and a sharp sense of humor bolster her restrained artistry. (Jazz at Kitano, 66 Park Ave., at 38th St. 212-885-7119. Sept. 30.)

### Buster Poindexter

Even in his guise as the musically voracious lounge lizard Buster Poindexter, the bruising energy that fuelled David Johansen in his days as a young rocker is still apparent. The Café Carlyle may seem an unlikely locale for him, but Poindexter has made this tony night spot a home away from home, filling the room with rootsy rock, blues, and standards to which he's applied his own endearingly louche charm. (Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. 212-744-1600. Sept. 29-Oct. 10.)

### Trio 3

Although a guest pianist has often been woven into the fabric of this exploratory ensemble, here the saxophonist **Oliver Lake**, the bassist **Reggie Workman**, and the drummer **Andrew Cyrille**, illustrious veterans all, go it alone. The air of authenticity that pervades the group's fervent improvisations is unmistakable—each man was there, decades ago, when post-bop morphed into free jazz, helping to make the new music happen. (Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St. 212-475-8592. Sept. 29-Oct. 1.)

# John Luther Adams

October 7 - 10

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# ART

## MUSEUMS SHORT LIST

### METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

"Kongo: Power and Majesty." Through Jan. 3.

### MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

"Transmissions: Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America, 1960-1980." Through Jan. 3.

### GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

"Doris Salcedo." Through Oct. 12.

### WHITNEY MUSEUM

"Archibald Motley: Jazz Age Modernist." Opens Oct. 2.

### BROOKLYN MUSEUM

"Impressionism and the Caribbean: Francisco Oller and His Transatlantic World." Opens Oct. 2.

### AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

"The Butterfly Conservatory." Through May 29.

### JEWISH MUSEUM

"Becoming Jewish: Warhol's Liz and Marilyn." Through Feb. 7.

### MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM

"Ernest Hemingway: Between Two Wars." Through Jan. 31.

### NEUE GALERIE

"Berlin Metropolis: 1918-1933." Opens Oct. 1.

### STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM

"Everything, Everyday." Through Oct. 25.

## GALLERIES SHORT LIST

### CHELSEA

Keltie Ferris  
Mitchell-Innes & Nash  
534 W. 26th St. 212-744-7400.

### Mark Grotjahn

Kern  
532 W. 20th St. 212-367-9663.  
Through Oct. 29.

### Dana Schutz

Petzel  
456 W. 18th St. 212-680-9467.  
Through Oct. 24.

### Wolfgang Tillmans

Zwirner  
525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070.  
Through Oct. 24.

## MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

### Museum of Modern Art

#### "Picasso Sculpture"

You may come away from this magnificent show of nearly a hundred and fifty objects, which date from 1902 to 1964, convinced that Picasso was more naturally a sculptor than a painter, though all his training and early experience, and by far most of his prodigious energy, went into painting. The definitive artist of the twentieth century was an amateur—nearly a hobbyist—in sculpture, so the medium reveals the core predilections of his genius starkly, without the dizzying subtleties of his painting but true to its essence. Most of his pictures conjure space that is cunningly fitted to the images that inhabit it. When the space becomes real, the dynamic jolts. The herky-jerky intermittence of the artist's involvement with sculpture might seem an obstacle to a reconsideration of his achievement, but it proves to be a boon. Each generation looks at Picasso in its own way. This show gives us a Picasso for an age of cascading uncertainties. The story it tells is messier than the period-by-period, not to mention mistress-by-mistress, narratives of the past. Instead, each piece finds the artist in a moment of decision, adventuring beyond his absolute command of pictorial aesthetics into physical and social space, where everything is in flux and in question. Through Feb. 7.

### Asia Society

#### "Philippine Gold"

Before the arrival of Ferdinand Magellan and the Spanish fleet, in 1521, the Philippines were home to diverse (and too little studied) societies with sophisticated metallurgical technology and, on the evidence here, a taste for bling. This fantastic exhibition, co-organized with the Ayala Museum, in Manila, includes more than a hundred gold objects made between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries, most of them discovered in the last forty years. Precious metal was used for adornment—fluted bangles, diamond-patterned sashes, serpentine ear ornaments—but also for liturgical objects, such as a strange, asymmetrical vessel in the shape of a *kinnari*, or bird-woman. (When visiting the show, try to tune out the unrevealing documentary, whose narrator's booming voice echoes throughout the galleries.) The early Philippine people, or at least those at society's upper echelons, remained opulent all the way to the grave, judging by several gold funerary masks, including one whose top edge is cunningly slit and perforated into an improvised crown. Through Jan. 3.

England, the dockyard town where he was born. A singer who has released more than a hundred and fifty albums since 1977 and the author of five novels and around two dozen volumes of poetry, Childish also paints, in an instantly recognizable Expressionist style that owes much to the giants of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In this exhibition, Van Gogh-ish sunflowers rest in a Gauguinesque vase; the green cast of the skin of a recumbent nude recalls Schiele. The scene stealers are landscapes, four stands of birch trees whose snaking strokes conjure an animist vision worthy of Edvard Munch or Charles Burchfield. Through Oct. 31. (Lehmann Maupin, 540 W. 26th St. 212-255-2923.)

### Adam Fuss

Photograms, some as tall as nine feet, capture the moment a jet of water slices down the length of light-sensitive paper. The pictures are jolts of energy, and seem to defy their two-dimensional state; the splashes appear suspended in space, as if in a hologram. Fuss counters the theatricality of these works with another series of photograms, uncharacteristically restrained records of the subtle folds of sheer curtains. These elegant, minimal images have an interiority that closes off photography's usual window on the world, revealing nothing more than themselves. Through Oct. 10. (Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727.)

## GALLERIES—CHELSEA

### Billy Childish

Prolific doesn't begin to describe the output of this self-avowed "radical traditionalist" based in Chatham,



The painter Archibald Motley was a vital part of the Harlem Renaissance, although he lived in Chicago, where he captured life on the city's South Side, with stints in Paris and Mexico. The survey "Archibald Motley: Jazz Age Modernist," which includes the 1929 canvas "Tongues (Holy Rollers)" (above), opens on Oct. 2 at the Whitney.

COURTESY THE CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS. © VALERIE GERRARD BROWNE



A promotional poster for the TV show *Fargo*. The design is a quilt pattern with a white background and red, blue, and white borders. The title "Fargo" is written in a large, stylized, red cursive font, with a red ribbon-like underline. The title is surrounded by a wreath of colorful flowers, birds, and animals, including deer, a wolf, and a moose. Above the title are two guns: a shotgun and a rifle. The poster features several small square panels containing scenes from the show, such as a man in a snowy landscape, a waffle, a couple dancing, a man washing a car, a hand holding a flag, and a man being held down. The overall aesthetic is a mix of traditional quilt art and gritty, noir-inspired imagery.

# Fargo

OCT 12  
MON 10  
**FX**  
FEARLESS

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TV MA

### Trevor Paglen

The artist learned how to scuba dive in order to photograph the undersea Internet lines tapped by the National Security Agency, but this dashing backstory is at odds with the visually muted results: four large pictures of cables, haloed in the blue-green murk of the ocean floor. A video, "Eighty-Nine Landscapes," features panoramic footage of radio telescopes, seascapes, apartment buildings at night, and other reputed sites of the intelligence agency's electronic eavesdropping, accompanied by a soundtrack of ominous rumbling. Shot from afar with a telephoto lens while Paglen worked as a cinematographer on "Citizenfour," the filmmaker Laura Poitras's recent Edward Snowden documentary, the effect is insidiously banal, which may be precisely the point. Through Oct. 24. (Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 212-206-7100.)

### GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

#### Thorsten Brinkmann

Like a knight whose armor was scrounged from a flea market—a dented wastebasket for a helmet, a throw rug as a breastplate—the German artist poses for fun-house-style self-portraits. Brinkmann's decorative impulse

extends to the elaborate tableaux he creates for his photographs, which tend to involve an area rug in lieu of a backdrop, fragments of molding, and a shelf with a stray pot or two. This sprawling exhibition, which includes freestanding sculptures, displays of the objects Brinkmann used for his getups, and a photograph of a dog wearing a suitcase, is as diverting as it is nutty. Through Oct. 18. (Pablo's Birthday, 57 Orchard St. 212-462-2411.)

#### Samara Golden

Walk up the steps to a carpeted runway and, on either side, you'll find this Los Angeles-based artist's latest topsy-turvy immersion. Facsimiles of silver sofas and love seats are affixed to the walls, a detail made all the more disorienting by the floor, which is tiled in mirrors. Across the catwalk, two model banquet halls have been flipped ninety degrees, with the plates and cutlery glued down to the now vertical tables; one section is all white elegance, while the other has the plastic tumblers and checkerboard tablecloths of a Little Italy dive. (There's also a steam table stocked with gravity-defying noodles and salad.) On the floor, Golden projects a video of the sky, which is reflected onto the ceiling—though in Golden's

through-the-looking-glass vision, "floor" and "ceiling" are drained of all meaning. Through Oct. 25. (Canada, 333 Broome St. 212-925-4631.)

#### Gizela Mickiewicz / Roman Stańczak

Two incisive sculptors from Warsaw, the latest city being hyped as the new Berlin, share a fondness for humble materials—sponges, sand, steel hangers, adhesive tape. Mickiewicz is the more lyrical of the two, and her wall-mounted panorama incorporating a concrete baffle, a Plexiglas panel, and a gray curtain is visual haiku. Stańczak, who is more ironic, has an eye for found objects: a trio of flatirons on a steel armature plays metal against itself, while a broken-down wooden cupboard overflows with wood chips, its front door open as if it were spilling its guts. Through Oct. 25. (Bureau, 178 Norfolk St. 212-227-2783.)

#### Erin O'Keefe

Photographs of geometric arrangements of painted boards and tinted Plexiglas will inevitably draw comparisons to Barbara Kasten's influential oeuvre. O'Keefe, a New York artist and architect, nods to Kasten (and to Eileen Quinlan and Sara VanDerBeek)

but stakes her own claim to the territory—call it Bauhaus playhouse—in a series of seductively simple color images. Using reflected light and overlapping colors, O'Keefe creates luminous architectural illusions; when she applies paint to her constructions she conjures a winningly trompe-l'oeil effect. Through Oct. 11. (Denny, 261 Broome St. 212-226-6537.)

#### Warlimpirrnga Tjapaltjarri

The paintings of this outstanding Australian artist, who lived nomadically until 1984, when he was in his mid-twenties, are marvels. Against soft backgrounds of gray or coral, Warlimpirrnga paints lambent circuits of white dots whose irregular contours seem to tremble and oscillate. In the clean white cube of the gallery, these pulsating paintings might, at first, seem consistent with nonobjective art as we know it (based on description alone, the Op art of Bridget Riley may come to mind, or Yayoi Kusama's "Infinity Nets"). But these works aren't abstract. They are ardent, knowledgeable depictions of specific sites in the bush, irrefutable evidence that modernity and the sacred are not mutually exclusive. Through Oct. 24. (Salon 94 Bowery, 243 Bowery, at Stanton St. 212-979-0001.)

# ABOVE & BEYOND

### The Great Jack O'Lantern Blaze

The eleventh annual Great Jack O'Lantern Blaze, at Van Cortlandt Manor, in Croton-on-Hudson, starts on Oct. 2. But the carving of the more than seven thousand pumpkins (many of them artificial "art pumpkins," or Fun-Kins) that will be displayed on the grounds of the eighteenth-century mansion started in June. In addition to the pumpkin dinosaurs, the pumpkin spiderweb, and the pumpkin tunnel, which visitors might know from previous Blazes, this year there will be pumpkin ghosts, a pumpkin planetarium, and a pumpkin circus train. The Blaze will be ablaze through Nov. 15. (525 S. Riverside Ave., Croton-on-Hudson, N.Y. [hudsonvalley.org/events/blaze](http://hudsonvalley.org/events/blaze).)

### Archtober

A monthlong showcase of New York's architectural highlights and history offers an abundance of opportunities to explore both the city's iconic structures and its underappreciated gems of urban design. Events range from tours of the Manhattan shoreline on a vintage yacht (Oct. 1), hosted by the American Institute of Architects, to lectures on the history of the

Brooklyn sewer system (Oct. 28). Each day, a different Building of the Day (locations include the World Trade Center Transportation Hub, Oct. 5; the Flatiron Building, Oct. 14; and the new Whitney Museum, Oct. 20) will be open for tours guided by the sites' architects or other experts. ([archtober.org](http://archtober.org). Oct. 1-31.)

### AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Among the selection of rare coins offered for sale at **Sotheby's** (Sept. 30), one in particular stands out: a 1794 silver dollar whose impeccable provenance can be traced back practically to the day it was stamped. This fact alone gives it an estimated value higher than that of any of the paintings—by Grandma Moses, Alfred Thompson Bricher, and others—at the house's sale of American art two days later (Oct. 2). (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) • **Christie's** closes out the month on Sept. 30 with one of its First Open sales, a compendium of lower-priced postwar and contemporary art and design objects targeted toward new or mid-range collectors. This is the place to pick up an ink drawing or necklace by Calder, a small sculpture ("Yellow Brushstroke") by

Roy Lichtenstein, or a doodle by de Kooning. Then, on Oct. 5, the auctioneer presents the first of two offerings of photographs, led by images by Adams, Penn, Steichen, and Man Ray. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) • On Sept. 30, the uptown auctioneer **Doyle** combines two specialties—New York

personalities and the Belle Époque—in a sale that includes the collection of the dashing Croatian former ballet dancer Jelko Yuresha, whose eclectic holdings include Chinese screens, ballet costumes, Venetian mirrors, and enough bric-a-brac to fill several apartments. (175 E. 87th St. 212-427-2730.)

### READINGS AND TALKS

#### McNally Jackson Books

Lydia Davis recently wrote, in this magazine, about "A Manual for Cleaning Women," a posthumously published group of stories by Lucia Berlin: "Perhaps, with the present collection, Lucia Berlin will begin to gain the attention she deserves." On Sept. 30 at 7, Davis will be joined by the authors August Kleinzahler, Stephen Emerson, and Dave Cullen for readings from the book. (52 Prince St. [mcnallyjackson.com](http://mcnallyjackson.com).)

### Brooklyn Historical Society

A talk titled "Lost, Found, and Stewarded" features a panel that includes the *Times* columnist Eve Kahn; Ron Coddington, the author of "African American Faces of the Civil War"; and Michèle Gates Moresi, a curator at the Smithsonian Museum of African American History and Culture. They will discuss the particular challenges presented by researching the lives of black soldiers in the Civil War. (128 Pierrepont St., Brooklyn. [brooklynhistory.org](http://brooklynhistory.org). Sept. 30 at 6:30.)

### Brooklyn Public Library

The Pulitzer Prize-winning critic Margo Jefferson discusses her new memoir, "Negroland," about the privileges, burdens, and contradictions of growing up in Chicago's black upper class. (10 Grand Army Plaza, Brooklyn. [bklynlibrary.org](http://bklynlibrary.org). Oct. 6 at 7:30.)



## TABLES FOR TWO

# SUPERIORITY BURGER

430 E. 9th St. (212-256-1192)

PITY THE VEGGIE BURGER, consumed almost exclusively by obligation. Those who claim otherwise are either lying or rare specimens; Brooks Headley is very much the latter. A punk-rock drummer in the nineties and a former vegetarian, Headley has eaten countless bean-and-grain patties, and he began developing his own recipe while he was the head pastry chef at Del Posto. Last year, he sold the burgers at pop-ups around town, to great acclaim, and now they're flying out the door of his new place, in the pint-size East Village storefront that once housed an auspicious forebear: Amanda Cohen's popular vegetable restaurant, Dirt Candy.

Whereas most veggie burgers are sad, previously frozen affairs, relegated to the edge of the grill and served tepid, Headley's small, slider-size burger arrives satisfactorily hot. His is quinoa-based, rather than the familiar reconstituted puck of vegetable and soy bits; nuts and aromatic spices lend it a slight whiff of Christmas cake. Headley told the *Washington Post* that he was working on "the right squish factor"; the patty, when pressed between two halves of a Martin's potato roll, has the same give as rare ground meat. Mustard and pickles lend the classic McDonald's tang, and Muenster cheese and a slow-roasted tomato confer umami. A slip of flavorless iceberg lettuce is pure signifier: a cheap fast-food burger would not be complete without it.

The hand-lettered menu includes only six other items, two of which basically don't count (tap water and iced tea). A wrap of brown rice, tofu, cabbage, carrots, celery, and sunflower seeds sounds like vegan punishment but is easily the most complex thing on the menu—it tastes like a creamy, nutty, spicy-sweet curry. The Sloppy Dave, a Joe variation made with tofu crumbles, is a soulless ragù on a sesame-seed roll. On a recent night, a Brit with high hopes for the burnt-broccoli salad with eggplant, red chilies, and coriander vinaigrette declared that it tasted "like a weed roach." (It was not evident that this was a criticism until the dish went unfinished.) Dessert is a small sundae of creamy gelato and fruit sorbet that can range from punishingly sweet strawberry to alluringly tart nectarine.

Superiority's most impressive feat is its staff-to-customer ratio: eleven employees to only six seats. Turnaround is personably swift, and constantly changing specials keep regulars coming back. Blistered salt-and-vinegar beans had a perfect balance of salt and acid but tasted little like the "boardwalk-style" fries they were meant to elicit. One man felt that the Philly cheese steak, made with seasoned yuba, caramelized onions, and cashew Cheez Whiz on a roll, upstaged the burger, until it was revealed to him that yuba is tofu skin. But to fuss over the suspension of disbelief involved in vegetarian cooking is to overlook the fact that Headley's is very fine food indeed.

—Silvia Killingsworth

Open Wednesdays through Mondays for dinner. Dishes \$4-\$9.

ILLUSTRATION BY SERGIO MEMBRILLAS

PHOTOGRAPH BY LAUREN LANCASTER



# FOOD & DRINK

## BAR TAB COVENHOVEN

730 Classon Ave., Brooklyn  
(718-483-9950)

"I love a good beer story," a man gushed at Covenhoven a few nights ago. Young, the bartender to whom this love was professed, has a multitude of stories on tap: one for each of the bar's sixteen draft beers and countless more for the hundred-and-fifty-odd bottles and cans they sell. One group passed around a draft Oxbow Loretta (eight dollars)—a grisette, which, Young explained, is an old Belgian beer style, originally enjoyed by coal miners. "I could drink this all day," someone said, despite never having worked in a mine. The bar takes its name from a yellowed Dutch farm map of the area (the section in which it's located is labelled "Covenhoven") which hangs on the wall. Cavernous fridges illuminate the slim space, as well as the faces of customers poring over the panoply of alcohol therein. When asked for an unusual bottled porter, Young recommended the Oklahoma-brewed Prairie Artisan Ales Bomb (seventeen dollars), which will "knock you on your ass." The oily chocolate-syrup taste knocked some asses out to the quiet back yard—a discreet spot for devouring a build-your-own cheese plate, which might include a Muenster of "barely legal funkiness," Cajun pheasant sausage, and pressed fig. "Do you have a spare cigarette?" one stranger asked another. "I'm sorry! I would go buy some, but I just don't want to leave."

—Colin Stokes



PROMOTION



# TECH@FEST AT NIGHT

## FRIDAY / OCT 2

After the sun sets, come out to see our Tech@Fest evening lineup and enjoy a singular view of New York

City at night. Join us on October 2nd and October 3rd for programs engineered to boost your dopamine. Learn a bit, and play a bit. #NYerTech

### SoundCloud Lounge: Conversation with Live Performance

*Streaming the future.*

8 P.M. One World Trade Center (\$50)

The SoundCloud founder and C.E.O., Alexander Ljung, talks with the New Yorker staff writer John Seabrook about the future of music, technology, and more. Performances from the SoundCloud artists Towkio, an alternative hip-hop artist and member of Chance the Rapper's SaveMoney crew, and Blondes, the Brooklyn-based electronic duo.

Ticket purchase includes a single drink ticket for wine or beer (for those aged 21 and over).

## SATURDAY / OCT 3

### No Man's Sky

*Blast off.*

Sean Murray, the architect of the forthcoming video game No Man's Sky, talks with Raffi Khatchadourian and gives a demonstration of the game.

7 P.M. One World Trade Center (\$45)

### The comedian and musician Reggie Watts talks with Emma Allen

*Marching to his own beat.*

Includes a live performance.

10 P.M. One World Trade Center (\$40)

VISIT [NEWYORKER.COM/FESTIVAL](http://NEWYORKER.COM/FESTIVAL) FOR MORE INFORMATION.

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## THE TALK OF THE TOWN

### COMMENT

#### THE HEART OF THE DEAL

Late one night in January, 2005, Carly Fiorina sat in a hotel room in Davos, Switzerland, where she was attending the World Economic Forum, in a state of angry dismay. She was the C.E.O. of Hewlett-Packard, and she believed that, in an effort to undermine her, members of the board were leaking confidential information about the company to the press. She had instructed lawyers to question all the members, so that they could “come clean.” Now, on a conference call, they still denied the leaking. Two weeks later, the board fired her. As she writes in “Rising to the Challenge,” her latest memoir, “Fearing for their positions, they behaved in an unprincipled fashion and ousted me from mine.”

Others have portrayed events differently, attributing Fiorina’s termination to unhappiness over H.P.’s merger with Compaq. She had sold the deal brilliantly, amid a bitter proxy fight, but the execution was badly managed, and the value of the stock fell. All this might have been of interest solely to business-school case writers had not Fiorina unexpectedly risen to the top tier of Republican Presidential contenders, joining the two other non-politicians in the race, Donald Trump and Ben Carson. In G.O.P. circles, she is being greeted as a savior of, if not the Party’s electoral prospects, its sanity—as someone who might allow the focus to return to candidates like Jeb Bush. It’s an awkward space, at the intersection of outsiderdom and fear of the Donald, but, for the moment, Fiorina has claimed it.

“It’s only in this country that you can go from being a secretary to the chief executive of the largest technology company in the world,” she told Jimmy Fallon, on “The Tonight Show,” last week. “Wow,” Fallon said. “It’s unbelievable.” It’s also, as with much that Fiorina says, a little more complicated than that. In 1976, Cara Carleton Sneed graduated from Stanford, where her father had been a law professor. (He later served in the Nixon Administration and on the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.) She enrolled in law school at

U.C.L.A. but dropped out. She worked briefly in a real-estate firm as a receptionist, then got married, moved to Italy for a while, and returned to attend business school in Maryland, after which, Stanford degree and M.B.A. in hand, she was hired as a management trainee at A.T.&T. That was where she met her second husband, Frank Fiorina, a mid-level executive.

She quickly became known as a sales prodigy, a reputation that grew when she became a division chief at Lucent, a company formed from A.T.&T.’s telecommunications-equipment business. Some of the deals she closed were, in fact, unbelievable. In 1999, Lucent said that a little-known firm called PathNet would buy as much as two billion dollars’ worth of its equipment. As *Fortune* noted later, PathNet’s annual revenues were only \$1.6 million; Lucent would loan it money for the sale, which was unlikely to be repaid. But by the time such dubious accounting became public, leading to a collapse of Lucent’s stock, Fiorina, who was never accused of wrongdoing, had left for H.P., with a signing bonus worth sixty-eight million dollars and millions more in pay. When H.P. fired her, she got a twenty-million-dollar severance package, plus fifteen thousand dollars for career counselling. Only in this country, perhaps, could a C.E.O. receive compensation worth more than a hundred million dollars in six years, get fired, and use the money to enter politics.

Fiorina’s first run for office, in the 2010 U.S. Senate race in California, is best remembered for an Internet ad, produced by her campaign, that portrayed her primary opponent as a demon sheep with glowing red eyes. She won the nomination, then, in the general election, produced a video showing the Democratic incumbent, Barbara Boxer, as a swollen disembodied head. In the current primary campaign, Fiorina has been the target of some misogyny, particularly from Trump, so it is instructive to contrast her dignified response to his comments about her face and her voice—“I think women all over this country heard very clearly what Mr. Trump said”—to the



use, in her anti-Boxer ad, of footage of fingernails scraping a chalkboard. (Boxer responded with an ad noting that Fiorina had fired thirty thousand employees at H.P., and she won by a million votes.) It is a contradiction that Fiorina seems to revel in; in her memoir, she decries sexism and, in the next paragraph, rejects the “feminist movement” as “politicized” and “captured by a left-wing agenda.”

For Fiorina, the center of that agenda is reproductive rights, or, as she puts it, the “butchery” of abortion. In the most recent G.O.P. debate, she called for the defunding of Planned Parenthood and dared President Obama to look at an undercover video about the organization, made by an anti-abortion group: “Watch a fully formed fetus on the table, its heart beating, its legs kicking, while someone says, ‘We have to keep it alive to harvest its brain.’” There are graphic segments in the video, but it does not show what Fiorina described. Yet, when Chris Wallace, of Fox News, asked her to acknowledge that “there is no actual footage of the incident,” Fiorina replied, “No, I don’t accept that.”

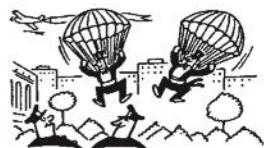
As a campaigner, she is more adept than Trump at pivoting from blunt personal attacks to confident policy proposals that tend to be described as “crisp”—full of details, if not facts. Of the Affordable Care Act, she says, “What you see is emergency-room visits are up over fifty per cent.” (There is no

apparent source for this number.) As an executive, she can “read the fine print” of the science on climate change, which, according to her, shows that there’s nothing the U.S. can do about it. California’s drought, she contends, is a “man-made disaster,” not because of climate change but because “liberal” politicians, worried about fish, prevented the state from building dams. “That’s pretty dumb,” she told Chuck Todd. (One of those conservation-minded politicians was Ronald Reagan.) Businesspeople, she says, are “accountable.” Politicians are not.

And yet Fiorina defends her record at H.P. with numbers that are often muddled (pointing to revenues instead of profits) or opaque (“We tripled innovation”). If Trump’s success is a testament to brash celebrity, Fiorina’s signals the power of content-blind marketing, at least in the short term. In recent years, H.P. has gone through so many changes that it’s hard to tease out what her effect on its long-term prospects has been. (Meg Whitman, the current C.E.O., recently announced that the firm would split, cutting up to thirty thousand jobs.) In the unsettled period after Fiorina’s departure, *Fortune* reported, employees sometimes ignored managers’ instructions, a maneuver they called “flipping the bozo bit.” It sounds like a G.O.P. code name for a Trump-removal operation. If Fiorina closes that deal, what’s next?

—Amy Davidson

## VISITING DIGNITARIES MIDTOWN SHUFFLE



For observers of religious royalty, last week in New York was a bonanza. In town, for various reasons, were His Holiness, Pope Francis; Her Holiness, Beyoncé, to perform in Central Park; and a group of people who like to “feel that they’re the sun around which everyone orbits,” as a representative of the Waldorf Astoria recently said, describing the heads of state who were visiting for the Seventieth General Assembly of the United Nations. The logistical challenges were numerous: clearing the streets for the Pope’s Fiat, conducting Secret Service “sweeps,” and figuring out where everyone was going to stay. Beyoncé had her apartment, in Tribeca, and the Pope had a Vatican town house near Central Park, but housing the hundred and ninety-three U.N. delegations was another headache. There are only so many Presidential suites.

Further complicating matters, for the first time since the U.N.’s founding, in 1945, the American delegation had can-

celled its reservation at the Waldorf. At issue was the hotel’s new landlord, a Chinese insurance company with ties to the Communist Party, which bought the Waldorf for two billion dollars last October. The Americans moved a block away, to the New York Palace, best known as a frequent backdrop on “Gossip Girl.” (The Catholic Church owns the land, which is across Madison Avenue from St. Patrick’s.) The Palace has had its share of authoritarian owners—the Sultan of Brunei, Leona Helmsley—but is now run by a South Korean conglomerate. “Seoul is undoubtedly delighted with the shift,” P. J. Crowley, a former Assistant Secretary of State, said.

The Americans’ move set in motion a game of musical suites. The Indians, who typically stay at the Palace, switched to the Waldorf—perhaps in a show of intracontinental solidarity. Every Chinese leader since 1974 has stayed in the Waldorf, and Vladimir Putin was there, too. The Pakistanis were also in the hotel, which made for sensitive movements in elevator banks, though they were dining at the Palace on the day that Prime Minister Modi arrived.

“I’m surprised he’s not staying at the Pierre,” an Indian-American lawyer who was standing amid a crowd of supporters in the lobby said. He was alluding to

the fact that the hotel is now owned by the Tata Group, an Indian company.

Despite the Americans’ defection, the Waldorf was hosting more than twenty-five delegations—occupying three-quarters of its rooms. (Conveniently, it offers twenty-six “presidential-style” suites.) “This is our busiest time of year,” Carlos Cabrera, who coordinates floral arrangements for the hotel, said on Friday, after sending a bouquet of hydrangeas and calla lilies to a Balkan leader’s suite. One avenue over, the Shelburne had eight delegations; the Benjamin had six. Most bookings were in Manhattan, but B & Bs elsewhere have cause for hope: in 1995, the senior diplomat from Palau stayed at a Super 8 on Governors Island.

A hospitality arms race was under way: the Waldorf typically provides Turkish coffee for the Turks, qiblas for Muslim delegations, and extra slippers for Asian delegations—a pair for the bedroom and another for the bath. The Palace customizes scents for each room, while the Benjamin decorates with flowers from each country’s flora. Bureaucratic needs are accommodated; some delegations insist that rooms be distributed according to hierarchy—*aides-de-camp* below ambassadors—while the Russian delegation has been known to pay its bill with suitcases full of cash. All

the demands might make a concierge long for the Pope, who requested only that his New York bedroom be stocked with water and bananas.

Security, is, of course, the most pressing concern; when Modi arrived, the front door of the Waldorf was being guarded by hotel security, the T.S.A., and a Secret Service agent in a bulletproof vest. The hotel can bulletproof its windows, and has a hidden train track that connects to the Metro North system, in case a world leader needs to escape. Most delegations provide their own protection; at Café Boulud, in the Surrey, men in suits stand over the kitchen staff to make sure nothing untoward is added to the Premier's risotto. The Shelburne performs background checks on its housekeeping staff. "Security is so tight that we've had instances where heads of state never made it to the President's party," Richard Grenell, a former spokesman for the U.S. Ambassador, said.

Though President Obama would stay at the Palace, Samantha Power, the U.S. Ambassador, remained at the Waldorf, where America's Ambassador to the U.N. has occupied the penthouse apartment since 1947. The lease is up this year, which had Maura Moynihan, Daniel Patrick's daughter, feeling nostalgic. Moynihan lived there in the seventies, when her father was the Ambassador. "I hope Samantha's enjoying the view," she said, wistfully, from her two-bedroom downtown. She'd been to plenty of diplomatic cocktail hours at the Waldorf ("The Thais threw the best party"), but she had no plans to attend this year, nor did she have much interest in the Pope or in Beyoncé. "I saw the queen—that's Madonna—twice last week," she said, packing a suitcase. She was getting out of town.

—Reeves Wiedeman

## MUNCHIES DEPT. CHEF SAYS



If chefs are "the new rock stars" (the *Times*) and rap is "the new rock and roll" (Kanye West), then the Roger Daltrey of the current moment is a cannonball-shaped thirty-one-year-old rapper

from Flushing named Action Bronson. A culinary-school dropout who has been nominated for two BET awards, Bronson raps about hibiscus syrup and feta au four the way other m.c.s name-check Bentleys and Basquiats. On a recent afternoon, he sat at the rooftop bar of Eataly, in the Flatiron district, cleansing his palate with an I.P.A. "These days, I'm more of a water guy, to be honest," he said. "But when Chef hands you a beer you play along." He gestured toward his tablemate, Mario Batali, Eataly's owner. "He's got me out here eating pork, beef—shit I haven't eaten in mad long."

Batali's teen-age children turned him on to Bronson's music. "I can't play it at Babbo," Batali said, referring to his Michelin-starred restaurant in Greenwich Village, "because of all the 'fuck' and 'shit' and 'cunt' in it. But I certainly vibe out to it at home."

Bronson is prodigiously bearded. He raised his pint glass with one hand, pinning back his mustache with the other before taking a drink.

"That's a weird-looking move, dude," Batali, who wore orange Crocs and a matching scrunchie, said.

Bronson, who had on blue swim trunks and a huge Carhartt work shirt that looked like a minidress, giggled and shrugged.

"Are you picking up notes of clove and orange in this beer?" Batali asked.

"I'm good at comparing flavors," Bronson said. "I was eating something the other day, and it tasted exactly like Sour Punch Straws. It hit me right away."

"What were you eating?" Batali asked.

There was a pause. "I can't remember," Bronson said. Then, in a stage whisper, "I'm stoned all the time." To illustrate, he pulled a vape pen from his breast pocket and took a drag.

Bronson describes his mother as a "Jewish hippie chick born in Brooklyn." His father, an Albanian immigrant, owned a Middle Eastern restaurant in Forest Hills. Bronson learned to cook there, and became a head commissary chef at Citi Field, prepping burgers and fries for the stadium's luxury boxes and concessions. After home games, he cooked for the Mets themselves. "Mad steaks, beans, stupid amounts of white rice," he said. "This was when the team was mostly Dominican. They said I was the best chef they had. But I fucked

around and got mad at a guy in the kitchen one day, threw him over a desk—instant firing." (He never outgrew the habit: "Action Bronson throws fan off stage in Seattle" has more than a hundred thousand views on YouTube.)

Soon after he was fired, Bronson broke his leg. He started rapping in recovery and released an album called "Well-Done." Reviewing it on Pitchfork, in 2011, the critic Jayson Greene wrote that although he "longed to dismiss Action Bronson's entire existence" as a mere gimmick, "he's an undeniably talented rapper." Bronson later signed with Atlantic Records—his major-label débüt, "Mr. Wonderful," came out in March—and now hosts a



Action Bronson and Mario Batali

food show for Vice called "Fuck, That's Delicious." On the show, Bronson visits Noma, in Copenhagen; Osteria del Cason, in Venice; and Farid Grill, a street-meat cart in Astoria. He occasionally sears a steak or chops an onion; more often, he chews and then moans with pleasure. Batali called it "the most compelling food show in years."

At Eataly, with the Vice crew in tow, Bronson sampled an assortment of *salumi* and *formaggi*. He declared the mortadella "stupid delicious" and the prosciutto "unheard of." Sniffing a Taleggio, he said, "It smells like shit, a little bit." Then, after tasting it, "This is incredible."

He went on, "This is the culmination of everything I wanted in my life, before music. Culinarly, I always wanted to be up there with the greats."

As they walked toward the pizza counter, Batali listened to a portable CD player that had been pre-loaded with Bronson's latest album. As he heard the line "Hide drugs behind the box of

De Cecco,” he stopped suddenly. “Did you just say, ‘box of De Cecco’?”

“Yeah, for sure,” Bronson said, smiling.

In a kitchen on the fourteenth floor, Bronson tasted a pork slider (“If I were a sandwich, I would have sex with this sandwich”) and a new dish: baby quail brined in milk, stuffed with mozzarella, breaded, and deep-fried. He bit into it, his head wobbling slightly, his eyes wide and watery. “This is a fucking winner,” he said, still chewing. “A chicken-nugget mozzarella stick? Ridiculous.”

—Andrew Marantz

## HOMECOMING AMERKS



Steve Cohen, the lawyer and former chief of staff to Governor Andrew Cuomo, was born in Brooklyn but grew up on Chicago’s North Shore. He started playing hockey when he was six. His mother protested: “It’s a contact sport.”

“Life is a contact sport!” his father said. The elder Cohen was from Bensonhurst and often told mythic tales of roughneck roller hockey. He also talked about a long-defunct professional team called the Brooklyn Americans: the Amerks. Puckheads speak of the so-

called Original Six, the National Hockey League’s core clubs, but there was a time when the Amerks made it seven. Years later, Cohen, while working as the head of the violent-gangs unit in the U.S. Attorney’s office (and skating for a men’s-league team called Blind Justice), came across records from the federal prosecution, in 1925, of the Amerks’ owner, the bootlegger Big Bill Dwyer. Juicy stuff. Cohen became obsessed.

Prior to his arrest, Dwyer had bought the struggling Hamilton Tigers, from Ontario, and renamed them the New York Americans. The Amerks, and not the Rangers, were the first team to play hockey in the old Madison Square Garden. After the Rangers were founded, the following year, the two clubs shared the building. The Amerks, a leathery bunch, basically lived at Dwyer’s headquarters down the street, the Forrest Hotel, gambling and carousing as Damon Runyon looked on. They weren’t very good—the players’ motto was “Join the Americans and laugh yourself to death”—but they beat the Rangers in the playoffs in 1939.

By then, they were managed and coached by a fiery former player named Mervyn (Red) Dutton. With Dwyer in prison for tax evasion, the N.H.L. had taken over the team. Resentful of the Rangers, Dutton renamed the team the Brooklyn Americans, urged the players to live in Brooklyn, and began planning an arena on Fort Greene Place. They

practiced at the Brooklyn Ice Palace, at Bedford and Atlantic. But the Second World War soon decimated the roster, and the league suspended the team. Dutton became the president of the league, on the condition that it would reinstate his club after the war. In 1946, under pressure from the Rangers, the N.H.L.’s board of governors reneged. The Amerks were gone for good. Dutton resigned and put a curse on the Rangers, which held up past his death, in 1987.

“This was a uniquely Brooklyn story,” Cohen said the other night. “The team that never was.” He’d considered writing a book about it called “Only the Dead Know the Brooklyn Americans,” but instead settled for persuading the Brooklyn Historical Society to stage an exhibit—a better deployment, perhaps, of the arm-twisting and fund-raising talents he’d honed while playing the other contact sport.

Last week, at a reception to celebrate the exhibit’s opening, a rink-rat assemblage perused the memorabilia and the old, jumpy footage. Among the guests were young skaters—a dozen from the New York Riveters, the city’s entrant in the fledgling National Women’s Hockey League—and a few aging enthusiasts, including Stan Fischler, the broadcaster known as the Maven, whose 1969 book, “Bobby Orr and the Big, Bad Bruins,” had hooked Cohen on the game. (Fischler had got the bug thirty years earlier, after reading “Hockey: The Fastest Game on Earth,” by Red Dutton.) Cohen had spent months tracking down Dutton’s descendants, and had solicited the help of the Society of International Hockey Researchers (“Yup, it exists, and I’m a member”). This eventually led him to Dutton’s nephew, Bill Dutton, who came to the opening with three of his four sons. He’d been waiting for an invitation.

Dutton, eighty-two, had a brush cut, a firm jawline, and teeth that looked suspiciously like replacements for a set scattered on a frozen pond. Reared in Virden, Manitoba, Dutton had played and coached, but he’d made his bundle prospecting for oil and gas in Saskatchewan. He now lives on Vancouver Island (“I live on a golf course. Well, I own the golf course”) and owns a minority share of the Arizona Coyotes. His connections to Brooklyn were scant. “There’s a guy who’s a former stick boy for the



*“Hi, I’d like to add you to my professional network on LinkedIn.”*

Americans, who parks cars for Coyotes games," he said. "He's ninety-seven years old. Still parking cars!"

As it happened, this was also the night that pro hockey returned to the borough. The New York Islanders, formerly of Nassau County, were playing their first pre-season game eight blocks east, in their new home, the Barclays Center, practically on the site of the old Ice Pal-



*Red Dutton*

ace. One of the Islanders' owners, Jon Ledecy, had skipped the first period to attend the Historical Society party, and he invited everyone present to join him at the Barclays Center for the second period. So, before long, a procession of guests headed down to the new barn, to bear witness to the fulfillment of Red Dutton's long-deferred dream.

—Nick Paumgarten

## UP LIFE'S LADDER SPREADING THE WORD



It can be tough, in these days of promoted tweets and pop-up notifications, to capture someone's attention. Kaluk, a troupe of branding consultants-cum-street performers, mostly from Red Hook and all under the age of twenty-five, offers, according to the group's Web site, "a playful touch of theatricality to get your brand noticed in a crowd." As dusk fell at Louis Valentino Jr. Park, overlooking the Red Hook Channel, several members arrived early for a public movie night, a screening of "The

Incredibles," sponsored by local businesses. The marketers leaned against a wall, wearing black-and-orange T-shirts that read "Spread the Word."

The Kaluk team, weary of digital ploys, promotes products the old-fashioned way: with spectacle. "People on Facebook, they don't look at stuff," one of the group's founders, a twenty-year-old named Luis Fernandez, said, at the park. "Or they do, but what would you remember? That or *this*?" He pointed to one of his cohorts, who was putting on a robot costume. "The marketing that we do is not regular marketing," he went on. "We're not boring. I'm not trying to insult other marketing, but, it's, like, they're so basic. They don't take chances."

Fernandez and some friends were students at South Brooklyn Community High, a transfer school for kids who've dropped out, when they became known as the Hype All Stars—they could be counted on to rev up a crowd. The school is operated, in part, by Good Shepherd Services, a family-support agency. Reg Flowers, who coordinated its community outreach, helped the hype crew start a business. Aida Pedroza, Fernandez's co-founder, was quickly on board: "You're about to graduate high school, and someone says, 'Do you want to create your own business?' Of course."

Kaluk officially launched this summer. (The name is an acronym for the names of the early joiners.) Good Shepherd provides space for the group's headquarters, at a community center in Red Hook. For the past year, the Kalukers—there are now ten of them—have gathered for weekly training sessions, taught by volunteers and by Good Shepherd staff. There were lessons in budget-planning, accounting, and improv. Flowers taught role-playing. "Having a master's in theatre from Yale is really useful," he said. "A lot of it is creating live-action commercials on the street." Kaluk is a workers' cooperative—everybody shares ownership. "I hate pyramids," Fernandez said. "I don't want to be at the top. I'm more of a chill dude." Carlos Menchaca, the local City Council representative, hired the group to drum up votes for a participatory budget proposal. A community farm in Red Hook had a team member dress up as a giant pea pod.

At the edge of the park, preparations for the evening's gig were under way. The

crew had been hired by the Red Hook Community Reconstruction Planning Committee to promote the installation of a microgrid that could provide backup power during storms. A crowd had gathered, sprawling on the grass in front of the movie screen. The opening credits rolled. Suddenly, the lights shut off. "The power is out!" a Kaluker shouted. "There's no movie tonight!" The audience booed; children wailed. The Kaluk crew tittered: their intervention had begun.

Corey Blant, the scene's leading player, took the stage, holding a blinking light beneath his chin. Addressing the perplexed crowd, he made his pitch. "The Red Hook community microgrid will be a solar-powered backup generator," he said. "If the power goes out, we can avoid another Hurricane Sandy situation!" Then the robot entered, breakdancing to "The Power," by Snap!, as Kalukers distributed informational stickers. People cheered.

"Beautiful!" Fernandez, who was watching from the edge of the lawn, said. Kaluk would take home about five thousand dollars for the job. Some of that would be split among the members, and the rest would be deposited into a group bank account. "They're not all running around in new sneakers because of this," Flowers said. Most of the members have part-time jobs; they hope Kaluk will pay their bills within two or three years.

Tyshawn Ortiz, another Kaluker, reflected on the night's work. "You could have written everybody a blast message, but I'm pretty sure they get about fifty of those a day," he said. "They're going to remember that dancing robot. Some people put the stickers on their arms, their heads, their books."

The robot, Jeremiah Ortiz, wandered over. "It was my first time in a robot costume, but not my first time in costume," he said.

The movie started again. Ethan Weber, a former Red Hook resident who had set up camp on a blanket, said, "It was sort of hard to hear their yelling after the power cut out. It was something about the microgrid. We lived here during Sandy."

"We'll look it up," Dale Rohrbaugh, one of Weber's friends, said. Then they turned back to the screen, to watch "The Incredibles."

—Betsy Morais

# SOMETHING BORROWED

*Kenneth Goldsmith's poetry elevates copying to an art, but did he go too far?*

BY ALEC WILKINSON



To appreciate the beleaguered position that Kenneth Goldsmith finds himself in, you have to know that in 1997 or 1998 three avant-garde poets, one of them Goldsmith, drinking in a basement bar in Buffalo during a blizzard, decided to start a revolutionary poetry movement, one that went on to endorse “uncreative writing,” a phrase and a field that Goldsmith invented. Goldsmith lives in New York. The other poets, Christian Bök and Darren Wershler, are Canadian. They had driven from Toronto to listen to Goldsmith read from “No. 111 2.7.93-10.20.96,” which is a collection of syllables, words, phrases, and sentences that Goldsmith gathered between the dates in the title. It’s a species of list poem. Chapter 1 has words

of one syllable. It begins, “A, a, aar, aas, aer, agh, ah.” Chapter 2 has two-syllable phrases. It begins, “A door, à la, a pear, a peer, a rear, a ware.” Around Chapter 50 or 60, the progression grows irregular. The last chapter claims to have seven thousand two hundred and twenty-eight syllables.

According to remarks on the back cover by the poet Charles Bernstein, “No. 111” is an “alphabetic bestiary of the ribs, joints, sinews, and bones of language’s alluring lore.” This is a high-brow impression, and possibly also a singular one, since not even Goldsmith has read the book all the way through. He likes to say that he is “the most boring writer who ever lived,” and that his books are “horrible to read.” Proof of

this, he said recently, is that they often have spelling mistakes: “My books are so boring that even the copy editors can’t read them.” He believes that the propositions his writing presents—uncreative writing’s permission to borrow entire texts, for example—are more interesting than the writing itself. “I don’t have a readership,” he said. “I have a thinkership.”

In Buffalo, the poets agreed that modernism was dead and that “language needed to respond,” Goldsmith said. Their movement became known as conceptual poetry, and it made Goldsmith as famous as an experimental poet usually gets—anyway, it made him the most famous uncreative writer. In 2011, along with mainstream poets, including Billy Collins and Rita Dove, and the rapper Common, Goldsmith read at the White House, and in 2013 he became the first poet laureate of the Museum of Modern Art. “He’s received more attention lately than any other living poet,” Cathy Park Hong, a poet and a professor at Sarah Lawrence, told me resentfully. “Academia has canonized him.”

Goldsmith, who is fifty-four, likes pranks and provocations and making people uncomfortable—challenging behavior, he thinks, is an artist’s prerogative. He is about five feet nine and thin, with a long face, and he usually has a beard or a mustache. He dresses flamboyantly, sometimes in suits with big paisley patterns. He has one in brown and one in blue, which he wore to the White House, with saddle shoes—Obama asked why he was wearing golf shoes—and he often pairs them with a small-brimmed hat that he wears pushed back, the way a child might. Appearing on “The Colbert Report,” he wore a salmon-colored suit, with a candy-striped shirt, a bow tie, and one green sock and one red sock, a reference to David Hockney. He also likes to wear long, flowing skirts over his pants, because they make him look as different as possible from the threadbare image he believes most people have of a poet. “I’m a dandy, and hyperconscious of image,” he said. “Every time I’m in public, I’m a persona, and people really hate that.”

He tends to speak slowly and enunciate clearly, in a stagy voice, and he

models his public manner on Andy Warhol and Salvador Dali. He is an obsessive reader of difficult books and a patient and close listener. He does not try to dominate a room, but when the spotlight falls on him he is prepared. Periodically, he embodies the archetype of the trickster who sometimes pushes things too far, even against his own interests.

**B**efore Goldsmith became a poet, he was a text artist—that is, he wrote words on surfaces. He began by making sculptures of books and carving words on them. The surfaces got bigger, until he was writing on panels that were larger than doors. For his last piece, “Soliloquy,” in 1997, he recorded every word he spoke for a week. He printed the words on pages and pasted them to the walls of a gallery. They covered the walls from floor to ceiling. “You were supposed to drown in my words, but the piece was a failure,” he said. “Nobody in the art world wanted to read, and I love language. That was the end of art for me.”

Goldsmith then published “Soliloquy” with an art-book publisher, and claimed that it was poetry. He divided the text into seven acts, one for each day. At times, you can tell where he is—in a restaurant ordering food, for example, or in bed with his wife—but you can’t always be sure whom he is speaking to, because only his side of the conversation appears. He said that he lost more than one friend when people read what he thought of them.

After “Soliloquy,” Goldsmith wrote “Fidget,” which is an account of practically every movement he made on Bloomsday—June 16th—in 1997. (Goldsmith deeply admires Joyce and has read “Ulysses” several times.) “Fidget” begins with Goldsmith waking up: “Eyelids open. Tongue runs across upper lip moving from left side of mouth to right following arc of lip. Swallow.” He described each movement into a tape recorder, which was laborious. It took him an hour to get out of bed. By the afternoon, he was exhausted, and at around five he fell asleep. He awoke after an hour, anxious at having the evening and night to describe. He bought a fifth of whiskey and drank it while sitting on a pier beside the Hudson River. He began to slur his words, then he accidentally turned the tape recorder off, so he lost

the rest of the day. The last chapter is the first chapter typed backward, with each gesture except the last one reversed. If he moved his left foot forward, he wrote that his right foot moved backward. The last sentence is “.pil fo cra gniwollof tfel ot htuom fo edis thgir morf gnivom pil reppu ssorca snur eu-gnoT Eyelids close.”

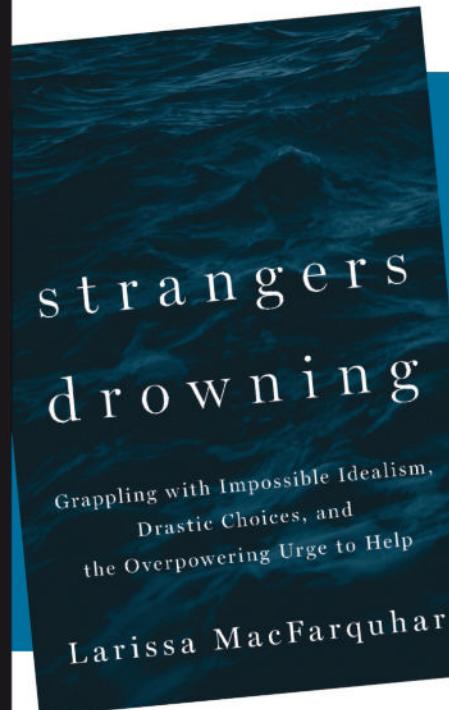
After “Fidget,” Goldsmith decided to spend a year practicing “uncreativity,” and during that year he wrote “Day,” the book for which he is probably best known. A strict work of appropriation, “Day” is a typed copy of the edition of the *Times* for September 1, 2000. The date is simply the day that he happened to be free to start a new project. “Day” begins with the upper left-hand corner of the front page and ends on the lower right-hand corner of the last page. The book is eight hundred and thirty-six pages long and took a year to type. Nearly two hundred pages are financial tables. “When you take a newspaper and reframe it as a book, you get pathos and tragedy and stories of love,” he said. “It’s a great book, and I didn’t write any of it.”

Next, Goldsmith wrote “New York Trilogy.” Volume I, “The Weather,” published in 2005, is a transcription, during the course of a year, of a minute of each day’s weather report from 1010 WINS. It is “a classical narrative of the four seasons evolving,” Goldsmith said. “Traffic,” published in 2007, is a transcription of each of the station’s traffic reports over twenty-four hours on a holiday weekend. One of WINS’s slogans is “Traffic and Transit on the Ones,” so the book begins at a minute after midnight. Goldsmith read from “Traffic” at the White House. The third volume, “Sports,” published in 2009, is a transcription of the broadcast of the longest nine-inning Major League Baseball game, on August 18, 2006, in which, after nearly five hours, the Yankees beat the Red Sox, 14–11.

One day, I had lunch with Goldsmith. “When skill is out of the picture, and it is in most of my books, then you’re left with the concept,” he said. “My cutting and pasting is an acknowledgment of this. I’m dead serious that this is writing now. You may not want to hear that or think of it as writing, but I’m telling you that the moving of information is a literary act

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in and of itself. Even when people aren't reading it."

"If your work is boring and horrible to read, why are you invited to the White House?"

"Because I'm a charismatic performer," he said. "My work is unreadable, but it's performable."

**G**oldsmith's rhetoric—saying, for example, that he never has writer's block, because there is always something to copy—annoys a lot of people. Conceptual art and conceptual poetry embody ideas, and both descend from Duchamp. Painting and sculpture are meant for the eye; conceptual art is meant for the intellect. Lyric poetry values identity, metaphor, and precision. Conceptual poetry "challenges subjectivity, metaphor, and precise language," Goldsmith said. He believes that he is applying to poetry art-world practices that are nearly a century old. The art world has become so accustomed to outrage and turmoil that it is now nearly indifferent to controversy, he said. "The art world's been through counter-movements, counter-revolutions, and then counter-counter-movements," he said. "People's idea of art is infinite, whereas their idea of poetry is very limited. Poetry is such an easy place to go in and break up the house. The avant-garde loves to destroy things, and I'm an old-school avant-gardist."

According to Christian Bök, there are four ways to be a poet. A lyric poet typically intends to express a thought or a feeling. It is possible, however, "to express oneself unintentionally—surrealist writing, automatic writing, and stream of consciousness," Bök says. "Also, Ginsberg at his most rapturous, 'first thought, best thought'—outbursts of feeling that aren't meditative." A third category of poet cares primarily about intention—having a plan, that is, and seeing it through. These poets use constraints to produce poems that aren't necessarily expressive. An example is a poem written using the avant-garde technique N+7, in which a poet takes out certain words in a piece of writing and replaces each with the seventh word following it in the dictionary. A poet named Rosmarie Waldrop did this with the Declaration of Independence and produced a satirical piece that begins, "We holler these trysts to be self-exiled." The fourth

category includes appropriation—giving an existing text a new form.

Bök is a professor at the University of Calgary. Visiting New York recently, he was sitting at the dining-room table in Goldsmith's loft, in Chelsea. Goldsmith placed coffee in front of him. Bök said that in Buffalo they had talked about "limit cases in writing," and that there were four: the ready-made text, the mannerist text, the illegible text, and the unauthored text. The ready-made text was a plagiarized text, like "Day." The mannerist text was written according to a constraint that made proceeding difficult—for example, a book without the letter "e." "The idea came from a French movement of writers and mathematicians in the nineteen-sixties, called Oulipo," Bök said. The illegible text included concrete poetry, a hybrid of visual and literary art in which words tend to portray an image, so that a poem about an angel might be printed in the form of an angel's wings. Unauthored books are written by computers and are "like rolling the dice for words," Bök said. If they move a reader, it is by means of uncanny associations and the sense that they read as if written by a person.

Goldsmith poured himself a glass of water, then sat down. "So you have unreadability, unoriginal, unauthored, and mechanical," Bök went on. "Back in Buffalo, we knew that the Internet was going to change how we would imagine being poets, and we were trying to think of what to do next. Our grandfathers who inspired us had a kind of perfect endgame—things like language poetry."

"Language poetry was the period at the end of the modernist sentence," Goldsmith said. Language poets believed that the meaning words held was as important as the way they were used. "It challenged the reader to take fragments of language and reassemble them, so that the reader becomes the author of the text," he continued. "The modernist project, beginning with Mallarmé, in the eighteen-hundreds, down through Joyce and Pound and Stein and language poets, in the seventies, had always been to deconstruct language to its smallest shard. Finally, language got so atomized that there was nothing left to do. It was language as grains of sand."

"It got pulverized to death," Bök said. "Conceptual poetry is born out of this discussion."

Bök became known for constraint-based writing. His collection "Eunoia," published in 2001, has five sections. Each allows only one vowel. It took Bök seven years to write "Eunoia," which was a best-seller in Canada and in England. It begins, "Awkward grammar appals a craftsman."

**G**oldsmith was also inspired by the conceptual artist Douglas Huebler, who, in 1970, wrote, "The world is full of objects, more or less interesting; I do not wish to add any more." He is fond of the term "unoriginal genius," which was invented by the critic Marjorie Perloff, a professor emeritus at Stanford; "Unoriginal Genius" is also the title of her book about twenty-first-century poetry. Goldsmith believes that the Internet, with its cataract of words, made obsolete the figure of the writer as an isolated man or woman endeavoring to produce an original work. Instead of depending mainly on his or her capacity for invention, the new writer transports information. He or she retypes and recasts, archives, assembles, and cuts and pastes, passing along pieces of writing and blocks of text, the way people do on social media.

Goldsmith's book "New York: Capital of the 20th Century," which will be published this month, is a portrait of New York City. It is based on "The Arcades Project," Walter Benjamin's portrait of nineteenth-century Paris, assembled mainly during the nineteen-thirties. Benjamin relies heavily on passages taken from other writers. "New York" is half a million words long. Goldsmith spent ten years in libraries copying sentences, which he organized into two categories, concrete and abstract. Concrete subjects include Times Square and the World's Fairs of 1939 and 1964. Abstract subjects include "grid" and "loneliness." Baudelaire is the protagonist of Benjamin's book, in the sense that he seemed to typify the period. Robert Mapplethorpe is the protagonist of "New York." Whereas Benjamin wrote commentaries on the passages he copied, Goldsmith did not add a word of his own to "New York."

Perloff's term for Goldsmith's type of writing is "moving information," by which she means both taking words from one place and using them in another, and the

quality produced by the result. A modern writer, operating what Goldsmith calls “a writing machine,” is more a collagist than a writer in the customary sense. “Context is the new content,” he writes in “Uncreative Writing,” his collection of essays on conceptual writing. “How I make my way through this thicket of information—how I manage it, how I parse it, how I organize and distribute it—is what distinguishes my writing from yours.”

Goldsmith developed his stagy voice while working as a disk jockey. Between 1995 and 2010, he had a radio show on WFMU, a progressive station in New Jersey, where he played avant-garde music and performed avant-garde gestures. Radio offered “the opportunity to confound people and anger them,” he said at his dining-room table. The show was broadcast once a week, for three hours. For an entire show, he played a recording of two men snoring. Another time, he had listeners call in and scream. The show was called “Unpopular Music,” so he felt that listeners were warned. After a while, the people who didn’t like it disappeared, and he was left with an audience. He believes that challenging someone not to listen (or read) makes the person pay closer attention.

Goldsmith was born in Freeport, Long Island, in 1961. His high-school enthusiasms were drugs and art. “I took my S.A.T.s on acid,” he said. “I’d already deconstructed and critiqued the culture, so I knew I wasn’t going to go down any normal path where the world of S.A.T.s meant anything to me.” He went to the Rhode Island School of Design, where he met his wife, the artist Cheryl Donegan. On their first date, he took her at four in the morning to an all-night supermarket in a small town in Rhode Island, where he interrogated people about what they had in their carts and why they were in the supermarket at that hour. In 1996, he started UbuWeb, a sprawling and eclectic archive that has become what he calls “the Internet’s largest repository of free avant-garde music, writing, art, film, and video.”

As for his heritage, he said that he comes from two distinct Jewish strains: “one very successful mercantile strain, and one highly unsuccessful intellectual strain.” Both grandfathers changed their names. One, a lawyer named Finkelstein,

changed his name to Field. He “dressed like Miles Davis in the preppy British period,” and collected books. In the late fifties, he put everything into Cuban sugarcane fields, “and come 1960 he’s penniless. Turns into a wicked alcoholic, loses his job, and becomes a rent collector on the West Side, carrying a gun and picking up cash.”

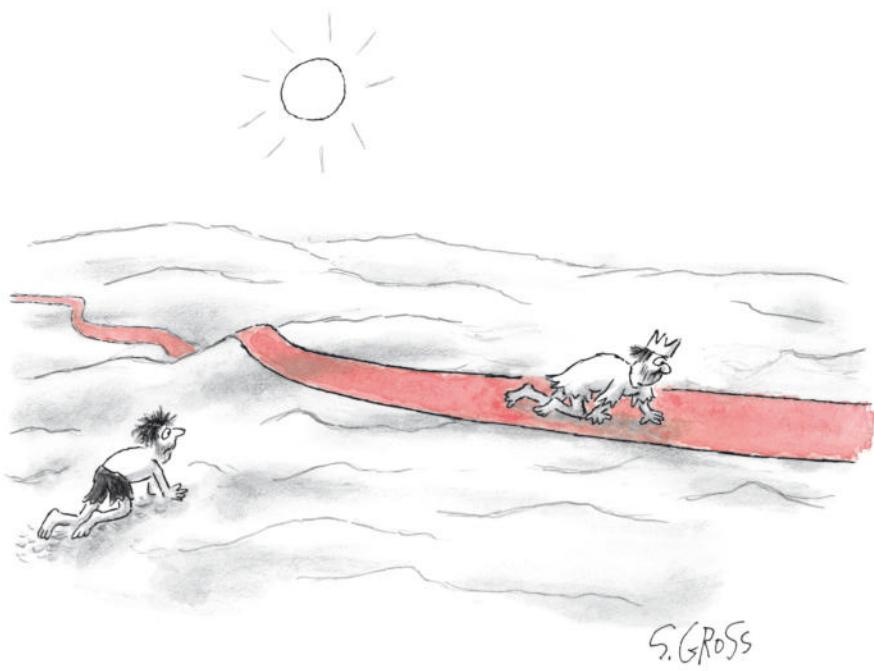
The mercantile side is “Russian-immigrant grandfather comes to New York penniless and goes into women’s coats,” he said. The business was called Bromleigh Coats. His grandfather Irving Goldsmith found Bromley in the phone book, “but Anglicized it further to Brom-leigh. It taught me the power of names, and I’ve played with inauthenticity for my entire career.”

A lyric poem exists in a context of ambiguity. It is not possible to know why Elizabeth Bishop wrote “One Art.” Any number of impulses or states of mind might have accounted for it. Conceptual poems are the result of their method. A lyric poem might pass through many versions before arriving at its final form; a conceptual poem has only one version. As soon as Goldsmith decided to copy an edition of the *Times*, or present the transcript of a broadcast, the poem existed. Since the poem was a concept, of course, it wasn’t even necessary to produce it.

People who don’t like Goldsmith’s poems tend to think that using another

writer’s words, coherently or not, and arranging how they look on the page, are gestures that have no emotional power. They think that poetry involves one person addressing another person, or an object or a deity, and that cutting and pasting can’t do that persuasively, since it is essentially aloof, and the aura of the artificial adheres to it. In addition, they feel that arranging letters and words in patterns isn’t sufficient to produce poetry. A poem must also address a deep subject. Furthermore, the point of being a poet is to establish an “idiosyncratic lyric practice that can’t be assimilated into the practice of others,” a critic told me, adding that poetry derives from a writer’s consideration of his own “sensual, moral, intellectual, aesthetic” concerns.

Lyric poets tend to be allergic to conceptual poetry. The poet C. K. Williams once stood up at a talk that Goldsmith gave at Princeton and said that hearing Goldsmith’s version of poetry made his heart sink. Williams, who died last week of cancer, told me that he objected to the word “poetry” “being used to characterize such silliness.” He said, “It’s removing expression and feeling from writing, but it’s also removing beauty.” The poet Charles Simic told me that he regarded conceptual poetry as being “like a violin played by a hair dryer. It could be fun, but neither Bartók nor Ashbery has anything to worry about.” The poet and critic Dan Chiasson, who writes for



the *New York Review of Books* as well as for this magazine, said that most of Goldsmith's work struck him as "dreary, over-literal pranks. I associate him with a certain kind of avant-garde spectacle. He dresses like a jester, and he shows up on 'Colbert,' but I find him amusing more than surprising."

Marjorie Perloff is widely considered the most influential critic of experimental poetry. She regards Goldsmith as "basically a realistic writer who gives you the feel of what it is like to be living in New York now," she told me. "You can't pay too much attention to what he says. I'm the most boring writer who has ever lived; you don't need to read it." If he really believed that, he wouldn't bother.

Perloff said that her friends often think that Goldsmith's work "is ridiculous and stupid, that Kenny's a self-promoter and anybody could do it, and I maintain that anybody couldn't do it," she said. "As with all conceptual art, it's a matter of very careful selection. All his works are not equally good. I don't care for 'Day.' It's a kind of hyperreality. My students love it, though. They like that he presented, in an almost Joycean way, what it is like to experience a single day."

As with all writing, "the aesthetic questions remain," she continued. "You can say you're glad that not everyone writes this way. It's an acquired taste, and it's comparative. I love Gertrude Stein, but most of the time I'd rather read Tolstoy."

Goldsmith's hegemony as a conceptual poet, achieved with Perloff's support—his appearance at the White House and on "The Colbert Report"; the perception that he receives the best-paying offers for readings, and the best invitations, and gets the most attention; his association with the University of Pennsylvania, where he teaches; the way he dresses and his studied nonchalance; his aggressive pleasure in upsetting people, his eagerness to promote himself, and his air of self-satisfaction—has led a number of other conceptual poets to feel that he monopolizes a territory that excludes them. Many of these writers identify themselves as poets of color. A poet named Tan Lin wrote me, "The conceptual program, as it has been developed and codified by critics in the past ten years or so, and I am really talking about the institutionalization of conceptual poetry in

academia, has focused mainly on the work of white authors." Dorothy Wang, a professor at Williams, said that poets of color have grown "pissed off by the stranglehold white people have on avant-garde poetry."

Further inflaming the exchange is Goldsmith's belief that a hallmark of uncreative writing is the irrelevance of inescapable identity, since the Internet allows a person to hide behind a multi-



plicity of names and profiles. Some poets of color feel that Goldsmith is subtly denying selves that they wish to assert and explore. Only a white person, these writers say, has the ability to shed his or her identity or to wear it casually. Their experience is that to be a person of color in America is to be constantly reminded of who you are. Dorothy Wang feels that identity in conceptual poetry "is a code word for racial or ethnic identity." She says, "Often, the assumption is that good experimental avant-garde work is bereft of identity markers, and that lead-footed, autobiographical, woe-is-me, victim poetry is minority poetry."

One day at his dining-room table, Goldsmith said that after "Sports" he "got bored with being boring." His work had traced "a trajectory that starts with the driest copying, where I trumpet being the most uncreative writer on the planet, and the most boring writer that ever lived," he said. Flogging this conceit, however, had led to conceptual poetry's being regarded as unfeeling and as interested only in formal problems. The perception that the field had discovered its boundary had led to its being less well attended. "We held the stage for fifteen years as the most challenging movement in poetics, with a form of expression that many people hated," he said. He wanted to hold the stage a bit longer.

What would help, he thought, was to find "a hot text." His next book, "Seven American Deaths and Disasters," which

was published in 2013, is an homage to Warhol's "Death and Disaster" series. It includes eyewitness and reporters' accounts, taken from radio and television broadcasts, of the deaths of John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, John Lennon, and Michael Jackson, and from accounts of the Challenger explosion, the Columbine school shooting, and 9/11. The reviewer for the *Times* wrote, "It knocks the air from your lungs," and it "will have you dilating on race in America."

Last March, Goldsmith gave a reading at a conference at Brown University. He read a poem that he called "The Body of Michael Brown," an appropriation of Brown's autopsy report, which he thought could have been included in his book as "the eighth American disaster." About a hundred people were in the audience. Goldsmith wore a long black skirt over dark leggings and a black suit jacket. He looked like a Coptic priest. He stood beneath a projection of a photograph of Brown in his high-school graduation robe. He announced that he would read a poem about the quantified self, meaning one that catalogued the evidence obtained from the close examination of a body, similar to the way he had examined his own body in "Fidget."

He read for thirty minutes, pacing forward and back. For dramatic effect, he ended with the doctor's observation that Brown's genitals were "unremarkable," which is not the way the autopsy report ends, and when he finished he sat down in the front row. He thought that the reading had been powerful—"How could it not have been, given the material?" he said. He believed he had demonstrated that conceptual poetry could handle inflammatory material and provoke outrage in the service of a social cause. Mairéad Byrne, a poet who heard him, told me that she thought the audience was stunned. A young man in the audience told her that for thirty minutes he had thought about nothing but Michael Brown.

Rin Johnson, a young artist, wrote me that the reading had upset her. She wanted to interrupt but didn't want to be rude. "I also didn't want to have to fight against a room full of white people who might be interested in hearing more," she wrote. At the end of the performance, Johnson, who is black, addressed a few remarks to Goldsmith, "something not very articulate, as

soon as I could, scolding Goldsmith like a shocked grandparent, something to the effect of That was lazy. I can't even believe you did that."

I asked Goldsmith what he had hoped to provoke. "Well, I don't know if I went into it with the intention to provoke, but I understood that it would be a provocative gesture," he said. "It had a lot of power, the kind of thing that happens all the time in the art world. People behave very badly in the art world, but it's what pushes boundaries and makes discussion."

The morning after the reading, Goldsmith was on the train to New York, looking at his phone, when he began to see objections to his reading, mostly from people who had only heard about it. During the next few days, the objections grew vehement. One came from a group called the Mongrel Coalition Against Gringpo—"gringpo" being gringo poetry. The Mongrel Coalition is anonymous, and didn't respond to questions I sent. Its Web site announces, "Our targets are: Homonationalists, Whitmanian twink poets, white LGBT poets who use the trophy of queerness as negator of racial privilege...bitches who write in English but refuse to see it (if you write in English, you are already in translation...) Marjorie Perloff & Kenneth Goldsmith the overseers of poetry... poets who write 'Identity politics are bullshit.'" Of Goldsmith the coalition wrote, "On Friday night—in what was clearly an attempt to salvage the corpse of 'conceptualism'—Goldsmith made explicit a slippage that we (and others) have been bemoaning for years: The Murdered Body of Mike Brown's Medical Report is not our poetry, it's the building blocks of white supremacy, a miscreant DNA infecting everyone in the world. We refuse to let it be made 'literary.'

Goldsmith wrote a response in which he placed the piece in the context of his methods, but it appeared only to make people angrier, perhaps because he didn't apologize. He was paid five hundred dollars for his reading, and he gave the money to Hands Up United, an organization that called, among other things, for an investigation of Michael Brown's death. He also asked the university not to make available the video of his performance.

Throughout the spring and early summer, a number of online literary journals published withering pieces about Gold-

smith. Several blogs on sites such as the Poetry Foundation also rebuked him. Goldsmith spent most of May and June giving readings and workshops in Europe, where, as far as he could tell, people either hadn't heard of the controversy or were more interested in conceptual poetry; only one person asked him about it. An art school in Switzerland had him fill out a questionnaire, which it published online. "Outlaw," his answer to the question "My background—in one sentence," so inflamed an experimental poet named CAConrad that Conrad sternly lectured him on what the word meant, then solicited responses to the Brown reading from twenty-nine poets. None were supportive. Conrad, who is white, published the reactions, along with his essay, on the Poetry Foundation's Web site, in what he called "a document against White Supremacy Poetics." Among the responses was one by a poet named Collestipher Chatto, who wrote that Goldsmith's reading had "made Brown's death a sort of scapegoat for the Euramerican nation to purge itself of its transgressions."

In another long piece, a poet named Ken Chen, the executive director of the Asian American Writers' Workshop, wrote that the reading showed that "Conceptual Poetry literally sees itself as white power dissecting the colored body." What seemed to offend people most about Goldsmith's reading was that he appeared to have used Michael Brown's death for his own purposes.

Some people wondered whether the reading might have been received differently if Goldsmith had explained his intentions. If he had "prefaced the work calling it a piece of protest poetry (or something) I am pretty certain the work would have been considered a triumph," Rin Johnson wrote to me. Goldsmith said that he had not made any prefatory remarks because he believed that his sympathies were plain, and because he felt that art should not depend for its effect on explanations.

Al Filreis, the head of the contemporary-writing center at the University of Pennsylvania, thought that the reaction had something to do with the ambiguity of Goldsmith's method. "Kenny's version of N+7 is retyping," Filreis said. "It's N+0. No one reading Rosmarie Waldrop would think that she had no problem

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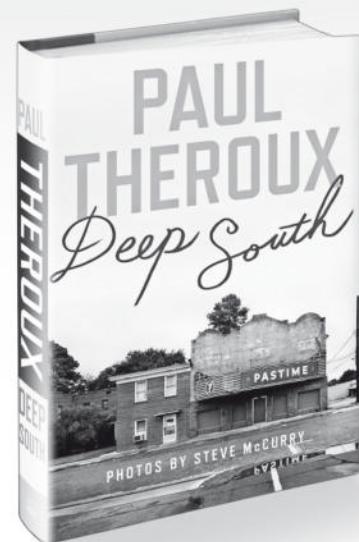
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with the declaration ‘All men are created equal.’ But, with N+0, you don’t always know what he’s doing. The question for an artist becomes: How certain do I have to be to make it clear that I intend to make this text work a certain way? How much complicity is there in reading a horrifying text?”

Other academics were pleased that Goldsmith had been set upon. “I am hoping that there has been enough anger that he won’t survive,” Cathy Park Hong, at Sarah Lawrence, told me. “Maybe he really did mean to be sympathetic, who knows. Two, three years ago, it would have been ‘That’s Kenny being Kenny,’ but in this racial climate you don’t get away with it.”

Marjorie Perloff said that when she heard about the reading she thought “it was a terrible mistake and certainly in bad taste.” The larger fault, however, lay with the obsession in the poetry community with political correctness. “It began with, You’re not allowed to criticize a poem by a woman,” she said. “Then it was poets of color. Now a poet is an activist who writes in lines. That has nothing to do with poetry. It’s just provocation and proclamation.”

About the only poet to defend Goldsmith publicly was an African-American named Tracie Morris, whom he knows. In an Internet exchange with a black man who identified himself as an artist and a curator, Morris said that Goldsmith was right to read the report, because there was no correct way to approach such material. For white people to ignore Brown’s death would be just as damaging, she wrote. What made the piece difficult for her was that she regarded it as “the truth of what happened,” she wrote. “It’s not poetic ‘interpretation’—it’s not a speech. It’s what we are ‘left with,’ the dispassionate, painful truth of this child’s lifeless body.”

Goldsmith makes a substantial part of his living from readings, and over the summer he was concerned that fewer places would hire him. A group calling itself the New Order of St. Agatha posted a document that it called “Kenneth Goldsmith Is Reading at My \_\_\_\_\_. Now What?” The text says, in part, “It’s hard to resist the impulse to kill Kenneth Goldsmith, but many different and more effective strategies are available.” And,

“Try things like: Sitting in the audience and reminding people Kenny is a racist by periodically yelling, ‘Racist!’”

Who is allowed to speak for people who have been harmed or who have suffered is an open argument. In the twentieth century, the discourse involved survivors of the Holocaust. “Can one speak about suffering if one hasn’t experienced it?” Rubén Gallo, a professor at Princeton who has written about Goldsmith’s work, asked me. “The debate gets very complicated, because you have different types of suffering. W. G. Sebald launched a huge debate in Germany when he wrote about the hardship people suffered in Dresden from the bombing.”

For Mónica de la Torre, a poet and a senior editor at the magazine *BOMB*, “the problem is that both positions are equally flawed. My main beef is with this idea that if I am Mexican-American I can express only that particular community. The idea that there’s this one-to-one correspondence is very dangerous.”

Goldsmith withdrew for the summer from talking in public, except in Europe. He has shaved his beard, so that he won’t be recognized. He said, “If all I can do is speak about what I know and what I am, all I can do is white and Jewish. I’m not willing to go down that road to restrict what I write about to what I am. That’s the end of fiction. That means a black person can’t have a white character.”

“Will this change your work?”

“I’m still interested in strong material that may provoke. I don’t want to shy away from it. I tried. I’m an experimental artist, and I failed, on a very big stage. I wanted to work with hotter material, and this was so hot it blew up in my face.” He sighed. “I’m an avant-gardist. I want to cause trouble, but I don’t want to cause too much trouble. I want it to be playful. When this happened, I realized I had hurt people. But an artist’s right to make a mistake is much more sacred than anyone’s feelings.”

His phone rang, and it was Marjorie Perloff, telling him to ignore a spiteful post that had appeared that morning. He paced as he talked to her. When he sat down again, his face looked drawn. “Sometimes I think I might be headed back to the art world,” he said ruefully. “I don’t deny that possibility. They still seem to like me there.” ♦

# THE DAD RESTAURANT

BY SCAACHI KOUL

Welcome to Café Bistro, a restaurant with a name that will be easy to remember the next time someone asks you where you went for your birthday. We serve dinner between 4 P.M. and 7:30 P.M. Here, the lighting is always turned up and the music volume is always low, to facilitate menu-studying and discussion.

If you are in need of reading glasses

mouth without forcing you to unhinge your jaw in public.

## Oysters Rockefeller

This dish comes with a twenty-minute conversation with your server about what oysters Rockefeller is and who invented it, followed by probing questions about her personal life. (Each of our waitresses is sure to be



because you left yours in the bathroom, where you were looking at a 1999 issue of *Time Canada*, your waiter can provide you with a pair.

We hope that you enjoy your meal, although we understand that you probably won't, because enjoying things is inexplicably difficult for you.

## APPETIZERS

### Chef's Salad

A mix of seasonal greens and vegetables, cut into pieces small enough that they fit comfortably into your

chipper and totally cool with you asking if her septum piercing is "a lesbian thing.")

## ENTRÉES

### Whole Grilled Fish

Enjoy this branzino that has been completely deboned for you, because on your honeymoon in Greece you choked on a fish bone and you're still too young to die.

### Steak Frites

A thick, juicy cut that is just French enough for you to mutter "*bonjour*" and

"*allo*" to yourself throughout the entire meal.

### Pheasant with Butter Beans

Roasted with chorizo and served with fresh bread. This is not chicken. Please don't order this and then send it back because it is not chicken.

### Your Wife's Daal and Basmati Rice

I don't know why you even go out.

## COCKTAILS

### Beer

Served the way it's supposed to be: near-frozen, sure to give you severe brain freeze halfway through, as it always does, and mostly foam.

### J & B Scotch

You know it's bad but you like it, and you don't care if there are better whiskeys available. (We won't start recommending anything fancy.)

*\*Please note, your adult daughter is not permitted to order an alcoholic drink.*

## DESSERT

### Are You Sure You Need Dessert?

Turn to your family and ask if they are sure they need dessert, intermittently glancing down at their midsections. Comes with you ordering dessert for yourself and complaining that whatever it is "doesn't have enough nuts," even though it was not supposed to have any nuts.

### Flourless Chocolate Cake

This gluten-free treat is the pastry chef's specialty. Be sure to eat two bites before offering the rest to a toddler at a neighboring table without first consulting her mother or considering the fact that you are a sixty-five-year-old bearded man offering a piece of cake to a stranger's child.

## THE BILL

Of course we won't hand this to any of your children. You're still the patriarch of this family, God damn it, and just because you're retired doesn't mean that any of them can put you in a home. You won't go! *You won't!* (Comes with house-made saffron ice cream.) ♦

# OUT OF SIGHT

*A former prostitute tries to rescue Iraq's most vulnerable women.*

BY RANIA ABOUZEID



On a Saturday night in late May, I sat in the back seat of a taxi as it drove through a shantytown in Baghdad. We were not far from Firdos Square, where, in April of 2003, invading American troops famously toppled a large statue of Saddam Hussein. A highway passed overhead, its traffic thudding, and Baghdad's tallest building, the Cristal Grand Ishtar Hotel—still widely known as the Sheraton, although the hotel chain withdrew from Iraq in 1990—rose in the distance. A forty-year-old woman whom I'll call Layla sat in the front passenger seat; she wore a black abaya, and strands of dyed-black hair fell out from under her

head scarf. Her husband, Mohammad, drove.

We were headed toward a dimly lit cinder-block shack. Children darted in and out of the shadows, and a pregnant woman in a long-sleeved, turquoise ankle-length dress stepped out to see who was approaching. She was a pimp, Layla said. In 2012, Iraq passed its first law specifically against human trafficking, but the law is routinely ignored, and sexual crimes, including rape and forced prostitution, are common, women's-rights groups say. Statistics are hard to come by, but in 2011, according to the latest Ministry of Planning report, a survey found that more

*Islamic militias intensify the dangers of Baghdad's sex-trafficking underworld.*

than nine per cent of respondents between the ages of fifteen and fifty-four said they had been subjected to sexual violence. The real number is likely much higher, given the shame attached to reporting such crimes in a society where a family's honor is often tied to the chastity of its women. The victims of these crimes are often considered outcasts and can be killed for "dishonoring" their family or their community.

Since 2006, Layla, a rape victim and former prostitute, has been secretly mapping Iraq's underworld of sex trafficking and prostitution. Through her network of contacts in the sex trade, she gathers information about who is selling whom and for how much, where the victims are from, and where they are prostituted and trafficked. She passes the information, through intermediaries, to Iraqi authorities, who usually fail to act on it. Still, her work has helped to convict several pimps, including some who kidnapped children. That Saturday night, I accompanied Layla and Mohammad on a tour of some of the places that she investigates, on the condition that I change her name, minimize details that might identify her, and not name her intermediaries.

The work is extremely dangerous. The pimps whom Layla encounters are women, but behind them is a tangled hierarchy of armed men: corrupt police, militias that profit from the sex trade, and militias that brutally oppose it. On the morning of July 13, 2014, the bullet-ridden bodies of twenty-eight women and five men were retrieved from two apartments, said to be brothels, in a building complex in Zayouna, a neighborhood in eastern Baghdad. I saw the bodies a few hours later, at the city morgue, laid out on the floor. Morgue workers blamed the religious militias, singling out the pro-Iranian Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, one of the many armed outfits proliferating in Iraq. Other groups of suspected prostitutes have been found shot dead, but the Zayouna incident was the largest killing in recent years, and it prompted at least fifteen neighborhood pimps whom Layla knew to flee with their girls to Iraqi Kurdistan. Layla often visits apartments like the ones in Zayouna, posing as a retired pimp. As a cover, she sells the madams abayas that are intricately

embroidered with colored crystals and diamantés; they serve to identify women as pimps, rather than prostitutes, at night clubs.

As we drew near the cinder-block shack, Layla leaned out of the window and waved. "Darling!" she shouted, then turned to Mohammad and whispered, "Be careful what you say." The taxi came to a stop, Layla got out, and the two women greeted each other warmly. Layla had known this woman since before the invasion, when they'd both been prostitutes working and living in the area. Layla introduced me as a cousin who was briefly staying with her, and said that she was looking for another madam. The pregnant woman told her that the woman had moved her brothel, and said where. She asked Layla if she had come across a woman from Basra, in the south, named Em Ali; Layla said she knew her.

"She is doing very well with all her girls," the woman said. "You should see the cars that come and take her girls. I sold Arwaj to her—five million dinars," the equivalent of about forty-two hundred dollars. "Do you think that was a good price?"

"No, that was a mistake," Layla said. "You shouldn't have sold her. She could have been a source of regular income for you."

Arwaj, a teen-age runaway, had been lured with the promise of safety and shelter, then held captive. The woman said that the girl had been unruly and screamed all the time.

"She was a virgin," Layla said.

"Not anymore," the woman replied. She had locked Arwaj in the shack with a man for three days, selling her virginity, then she sold her to Em Ali.

Mohammad offered to steal the girl back for the woman, as a ruse to find her, and asked where the brothel was. The woman didn't know.

As we drove away in the taxi, Layla said, "This is our work. That's how I have to talk to them to get the information I need." She added, "If they find out what I really do, I will be killed, without any doubt, because behind every pimp are militiamen and corrupt police." The trafficking situation was the worst it had been in recent years, she said. "Every four or five men now are calling themselves a mi-

litia. They can do whatever they want."

Mohammad said that the country's woes—"the theft, crime, killing, terrorism"—were all tied to the sex trade. He explained the mind-set of the men involved: "If I get used to this life style, I need to drink, to pay for girls, for rooms, for tips, for trips. That costs money, and I'll do whatever I need to get paid."

Iraq was once at the forefront of women's rights in the Middle East. In 1959, the country passed Law No. 188, also known as the Personal Status Law, which restricted polygamy, outlawed child marriage and forced marriages, and improved women's rights in divorce, child custody, and inheritance. Equal rights were enshrined in the Baath-drafted 1970 constitution, and women's literacy rates, education, and participation in the workforce were all actively promoted through generous welfare policies, such as free childcare. That momentum was reversed by successive wars—with Iran, from 1980 to 1988, and then the 1990 Gulf War and thirteen subsequent years of international economic sanctions. Female civil servants lost their jobs in disproportionate numbers, and welfare was slashed. As part of Saddam Hussein's "faith campaign," which began in the early nineteen-nineties, women accused of prostitution were beheaded, according to Amnesty International. Crimes against women only increased in the chaos that ensued after the U.S.-led invasion.

In 2005, Iraq's new constitution mandated that a quarter of the members of parliament be women, but Saddam's fall brought to power conservative religious clerics and parliamentarians who favored laws that would give clerics more control over personal matters. In October of 2013, Hassan al-Shammari, the Justice Minister and a member of the Islamist Fadila (Virtue) Party, introduced a bill that contained two hundred and fifty-four articles based on the Jaafari school of Shiite religious jurisprudence. The bill, which would apply to Iraq's Shiite majority, proposed legalizing marriage for girls as young as nine, entitling a husband to non-consensual sex with his wife, and preventing a woman from leaving her home

without her husband's permission. Article 126 stated that a husband was not required to financially support his wife if she was either too young or too old to sexually satisfy him.

Despite strong opposition from rights groups and a few clerics, the bill was approved by the Council of Ministers in February of 2014 and forwarded to parliament, which failed to vote on it before a new house was ushered in, in April. The Fadila Party's spiritual leader, Mohammad Yaqoobi, a white-turbaned, white-bearded *marja*, or religious authority, described women who opposed the bill as outcasts. The real blame, he said, lay with clerics who, in encouraging these women, were "opening the door of evil." Mohammad Jawad al-Khalisi, another *marja*, told me in his office in the Shiite Baghdad suburb of Kadhimiya that men like Yaqoobi were ignorant and "do not understand their religion."

Hanaa Edwar, a prominent women's rights advocate, said that the Jaafari bill made a mockery of the 2005 constitution. Edwar, a diminutive woman with a gray pixie haircut, co-founded several organizations that address women's rights, including Al-Amal Association, in 1992. "If you don't have power to decide matters related to your children or your pregnancy, how can you contribute to decision-making in your nation, on its future?" she said. The bill "considered women as just sexual tools for men, for their pleasure." The draft law remains dormant, but Edwar described it as "a time bomb."

The lawlessness overtaking Iraq poses a more immediate threat to the nation's women and girls, especially those without the support of their families. Since June, 2014, the Islamic State has seized much of the country's northwest, including the cities of Mosul, Ramadi, and Fallujah. The Sunni extremists have beheaded their male enemies and sexually enslaved some female captives, including several thousand women and girls from the Kurdish-speaking Yazidi minority, in northern Iraq. In the October, 2014, issue of *Dabiq*, the Islamic State's English-language magazine, the group boasted that "the enslaved

Yazidi families are now sold by the Islamic State soldiers.”

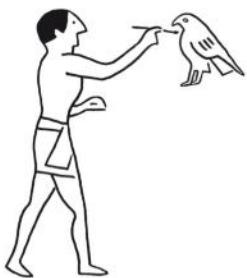
New militias have sprung up to counter the Sunni extremists, and existing ones have expanded. Human Rights Watch, following its 2015 World Report, accused some Shiite militias of engaging in “unfettered abuses against civilians,” including summary executions, torture, and the forced displacement of thousands from their homes. After twelve years of conflict, there are more than three and a half million internally displaced Iraqis, as many as two million war widows, and a million or more orphans. The U.S. State Department noted, in its 2015 “Trafficking in Persons” report, that the vulnerability of women and children to trafficking had “gravely increased” in the past year, and that security and law-enforcement officials, as well as criminal gangs, were involved in sexual slavery.

“I never imagined that we would reach this level of chaos, this degree of complete disintegration of the state,” Edwar told me. “You don’t see that there is rule of law, that there are national institutions. You just see militias, gangsters. There is no respect for diversity, for human rights in this country.”

In 2004, Iraq created a State Ministry for Women’s Affairs, but it was largely a ceremonial body. An engineer named Bayan Nouri assumed the post of minister in October of 2014. When I met Nouri in May, she was working on the eleventh floor of a parliamentary office building, in Baghdad’s International Zone. A soft-spoken woman in her fifties, she wore a long, belted overcoat and a hijab that was pinned under her neck. She said that, if it weren’t for the current war against the Islamic State, the situation for Iraqi women would be “better, over all, than before 2003.” Nouri expressed concern about the Islamic State’s kidnapping of the Yazidis, but she dismissed the claim that sexual violence was increasing: “They say it is present, but this isn’t obvious, it’s limited. It existed during Saddam’s time, too, but the media doesn’t talk about that.”

Nouri’s ministry had twenty employees, who helped to map out policies, pro-

grams, and strategies for other ministries to implement, but it had no budget. “Obviously, if we don’t have money or the authority to implement things, it’s catastrophic, it’s a challenge ahead of us,” Nouri said. She and her three predecessors had asked the cabinet and parliament to upgrade the status of the ministry in order to secure a budget. Instead, in August, as part of a government downsizing, the ministry was abolished, along with the Human Rights Ministry, and several others were merged. A former ministry spokesperson told me that Nouri has retired from politics.



Layla grew up in a city in southern Iraq, in a family of seven daughters and two sons. In 1991, when she was fifteen, her brothers were arrested by Saddam’s troops, after a brief Shiite uprising. When she went to the prison to plead for their release, she was spotted by a major—she still remembers his name—who said that he would spare them from execution in exchange for her virginity. When she returned home, her mother and brothers refused to believe that she had been raped. Ashamed, hurt, and angry, she left home for the anonymity of Baghdad and turned to prostitution to survive.

She was pimped in Kamaliyah, a rough, predominantly Shiite neighborhood in eastern Baghdad. She married briefly but continued working for herself. In 2003, she was a prostitute in Dora, a neighborhood in the southern part of the city, when the U.S. military arrived in Baghdad. In 2006, she and four other prostitutes were detained by an American patrol on suspicion of being militia informants, because different men were seen coming and going from their apartment. After two weeks in an American detention facility, they were transferred to Iraqi police, who put them in the Kadhimiyah women’s prison, where Layla spent the next six months. She was released without charge, but her experience in prison persuaded her “to stop being a prostitute who is part of this world of violence and crime.” She became determined to help girls and women like her.

In 2009, Layla met and married

Mohammad, who worked as a taxi-driver and, after the Islamic State took over Mosul, joined a Shiite militia as a volunteer. When they married, she refused to wear a white dress, feeling that she didn’t deserve to. He often offers to buy her one and to hold the ceremony again, but she declines.

“I was comfortable enough to tell him my story, all of it,” Layla said, as we rode in the taxi. “I told him, ‘Will you still accept me?’ He told me, ‘The past isn’t important to me—’”

“—the future is,” Mohammad said, finishing her sentence.

Mohammad is a tall, gentle man, with a neatly trimmed brown mustache. He and Layla usually spend Thursday nights, the start of the weekend in Iraq, at night clubs, talking with pimps and the girls they prostitute. But for several weeks the threat of raids by militiamen had kept them away. A month earlier, Layla had been at a club called Memories, in the heart of the capital, when a group of militiamen entered and fired off a number of rounds, killing several prostitutes and capturing others. Layla, who fled through the kitchen, watched as young women were dragged by their hair into cars. Six are still missing, she said.

“Sex fuels militias, because it is a source of money,” Layla told me. “There are two options facing pimps—either they work with the militias or the militias kill them.” Mohammad, fearing for Layla’s safety, usually accompanies her into the clubs, posing as a customer who is her friend. Prostitution is also conducted out of private apartments; Layla visits these alone. I asked Layla and Mohammad how many prostitution dens they frequent, “If I were to show you every one, you wouldn’t be able to see them all in twenty-four hours,” Mohammad said.

As we drove around Baghdad, Layla and Mohammad pointed out dozens of brothels. Many had boarded-up or blacked-out windows, Arabic music blaring from within, and police vans parked outside. Layla rattled off the prices for girls of various ages. The most expensive were “rosebuds,” thirteen or fourteen years old, at three hundred to four hundred dollars a night. Those between twenty and thirty years old ranged from eighty-four to a hundred

and sixty-eight dollars a night, and as little as forty dollars for a brief sexual encounter.

We turned off Al-Nidhal Street, in central Baghdad, into an alley jammed with traffic, car horns blaring, and stopped in front of a club. Its front door was an open archway bathed in dark-red and green light. As we sat in the taxi, two young girls—sisters, Mohammad said—rushed out of the club. The older one was fourteen, he said; she wore heavy makeup, a tight red dress, and a thin, pistachio-colored veil over her hair and upper body. The younger girl was nine, her olive skin plastered with face powder several shades too light for her complexion. Bright-red lipstick extended almost clownishly beyond the contours of her lips.

Layla yelled out to the girls, “Come, come here! Where is your mother?” They approached the car, hugged and kissed Layla, and said hello to Mohammad. “Where are you running to?” Mohammad asked. They pointed to a nearby building that held several brothels. “Our house is over there,” the older girl said. They chatted for a few moments before scurrying away. Their mother was a pimp, Layla said, who prostituted the fourteen-year-old and her two older daughters. The younger girl’s job, Mohammad added, was “to draw in the customers from the street, to stand at the door and invite people in.”

Mohammad and Layla hesitated when I asked if I could enter the club. Inside, I would be as vulnerable as any other woman there to the men who show up. “Any girl they see at a night club, they grab and take,” Layla said. “Even if you go in with a policeman, somebody higher than him—a militiaman or somebody—will take you if he wants.” Layla asked Mohammad, “How many have we seen them just take? I don’t want her to go in. If men from Asa’ib come in . . .” Mohammad agreed, and we drove away.

Two days later, I visited Abu Muntathar, the spokesman for Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq. The group’s headquarters is a complex of walled villas in Jadriya, a neighborhood tucked into a loop of the winding Tigris River. Most of the men in the compound were dressed in

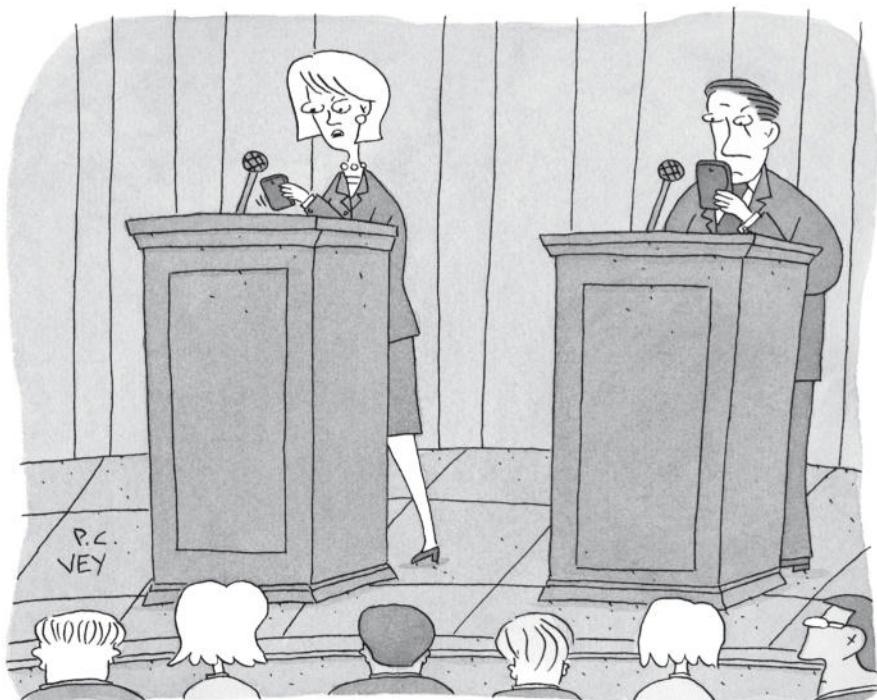
dusty, mismatched military camouflage and lounged around clutching Kalashnikovs. Abu Muntathar, who is forty-four, wore a crisp white-collared shirt, a navy pin-striped suit, and polished pointy black shoes.

Asa’ib formed in 2006 as a breakaway faction of the Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr’s Mahdi Army. Asa’ib is engaged in several key battles against the Islamic State outside the capital, and it has a reputation for combatting *al-munkar*—activities, including consuming alcohol and engaging in extramarital sex, that are deemed counter to Islam—but Abu Muntathar denied that this was so. “Personal freedoms are permitted for Iraqis,” he said. “Whoever wants to go to a night club or to drink alcohol, we have nothing to do with them. Today, the name of Asa’ib terrifies many, so some people say they are Asa’ib when they are not. If I walk down the street, nobody knows if I am really Asa’ib or not.”

He said that the group was trying to root out impersonators, and that it had detained some, although he wouldn’t say how many or what they were doing. The group’s television station, Al-Ahad, broadcasts two phone numbers for people to call if they have

been threatened by men claiming to be members of the militia. The numbers are flashed intermittently at the bottom of the screen. When I asked about the Zayouna killings, Abu Muntathar denied that his group was involved. “Where is the evidence that says we were?” he said. “You can’t just accuse somebody without evidence. Show me the evidence that it was us. It’s not true.”

Layla’s work takes her all over Iraq, but there’s one area in Baghdad, called Bataween, that is so rough that she won’t enter it. “I’ve drawn a red line around it,” she told me. Bataween was once an upscale, predominantly Jewish neighborhood, with elegant, intricately carved brick buildings and Juliet balconies, but the creation of Israel, in 1948, and the turmoil that followed prompted an exodus of Jewish communities from Iraq and across the Middle East. The façades have crumbled, and the neighborhood is now considered one of the most crime-ridden in the city and an epicenter of prostitution. Still, in the heart of Bataween, and unknown to residents, is a safe house run by the Organization of Women’s Freedom in Iraq. The O.W.F.I., which is based



*“My opponent hasn’t answered one of my e-mails.”*

in Baghdad, has a staff of thirty-five and receives financial support from MADRE, an international women's rights group.

The O.W.F.I. runs eight safe houses across the country and is looking to open one for Yazidi women, in the north; it is the only organization outside Iraqi Kurdistan to operate such facilities. The Bataween safe house, a squalid two-bedroom apartment, serves as a sanctuary for victims of sexual abuse and for women who have nowhere else to go. Since it opened, in September of 2014, more than a dozen women have stayed there.

The apartment belongs to a young woman with dark skin, a broad smile, and a squeaky voice; I'll call her Amira. In 2005, when she was about thirteen, her mother died, leaving her to care for her two younger brothers. (Her father was divorced from her mother and she was estranged from her step-father.) Amira did the only thing that she thought would protect her: after the traditional forty-day mourning period, she married one of her step-father's friends, a man in his forties, on the condition that he also take in her two brothers. Soon after, during the Iraq war, Amira, several months pregnant, was walking to the store with neighbors, when a car drove past and its occupants shot and killed the men accompanying her. She was taken to the Kadhimiya women's prison. "The neighbors said I set the men up to be killed by a death squad, because I am Shiite and they were Sunni," she said.

Amira remained in prison for two years, during which time she gave birth to a daughter, Mariam, and divorced her husband. (She voluntarily granted him custody of Mariam.) A judge finally heard her case and dismissed it. While in prison, she met Dalal Rubaye, a grandmother who works for the O.W.F.I., and was distributing clothes and other items to the inmates. "She used to say that they would help anybody who needs it," Amira said. "When I was freed, I went to find her, and she took me in." Since 2009, no one from the O.W.F.I. has been permitted by Iraqi authorities to enter the women's prison. Rubaye continues to push for permission, and is told each

## COMING INTO NEW YORK

After Providence, Connecticut—the green defiant landscape, unrelieved except by ordered cities, smart and smug, in spirit villages, too full of life  
to be so called, too small to seem sincere.  
And then like Death it comes upon us:  
the plain of steaming trash, the tinge of brown  
that colors now the trees and grass as though  
exposed to rays sent from the core of heat—  
these are the signs we see in retrospect.  
But we look up amazed and wonder that  
the green is gone out of our window, that  
horizon on all sides is segmented  
into so many tiny lines that we  
mistake it for the profile of a wooded  
hill against the sky, or that as far  
as mind can go are buildings, paving, streets.  
The tall ones rise into the mist like gods  
serene and watchful, yet we fear, for we  
have witnessed from this train the struggle to  
complexity: the leaf has turned to stone.

—John Updike  
(1932–2009)

time that the visits are indefinitely postponed.

I first met Amira in 2008, shortly after her release from prison, in an O.W.F.I. safe house in Baghdad. She smiled when I reminded her recently of our first encounter, when she was quiet and shy. "I used to be afraid of everything, of everyone. Now I'm not," she said. "I am proud that I have helped—that one day, whatever happens, somebody might say, 'There used to be a girl called Amira who helped women.'"

The location of the shelter is such a closely guarded secret that only a few O.W.F.I. employees know where it is. It is not officially called a shelter; Iraqi authorities forbid nongovernmental organizations to operate shelters outside Iraqi Kurdistan. (A domestic-violence bill that is currently before parliament includes provisions for shelters, as does the 2012 anti-trafficking law, but no state-run shelter has opened.)

Amira leaves her front door ajar until ten o'clock or so every night. She stepped over a permanent puddle of

water at the threshold and led me up uneven concrete stairs into her apartment. The main room was dimly lit, with several tattered red armchairs; a noisy air-conditioning unit filled the one window. Amira has a five-year-old son, who sat on the floor eating roasted pumpkin seeds. She divorced the boy's father, her second husband, although she's not sure when; she can't read or write and often muddles dates.

Girls hear about Amira's apartment through the O.W.F.I. or from Amira and other activists who carefully approach them on the streets and let them know that there's a safe place if they need it. I stayed there for several days in May, and there were four residents, including Nisrine, a lithe twenty-two-year-old with hair cut short like a boy's. Her mother had brought her in, because she couldn't look after her and was worried that the girl's step-father would molest her. The three other girls were sisters. (I have changed their names.) Noor, the eldest, was twenty-one, with two children in diapers. She had arrived at the shelter two months earlier, penniless, after her

marriage ended. Sabrine, the youngest sister, who was fourteen, came with her. She had been living with a physically abusive stepfather who, she said, forced her to beg on the streets and would beat her if she didn't make at least twenty Iraqi dinars, or about seventeen dollars, a day. "Sometimes I'd sleep in the streets instead of coming home, because I was scared of him," Sabrine said.

The third sister, Maya, who was eighteen, had arrived at Amira's two weeks earlier. She kept her head down, rarely spoke, and flinched when approached; when another person walked into the room, she seemed to disappear into herself. Only Noor knew what had happened to her. "If you open this subject, you cut her open," she told me.

When Maya was ten, she voluntarily entered a state-run orphanage in Baghdad, telling the administrators that her parents were dead. Five years later, her mother found her and took her back home. "My mother's man would watch her when she showered," Noor said. "He would sexually molest her." A month later, Maya moved into Noor's one-room rental in Bataween, but it wasn't long before a pimp approached her with the offer of free food, shelter, and stability. "She ended up taken by the people behind the red door," Noor said. "They sold her."

The brothel with the red door is a few streets from Amira's shelter. Written above the door is a Shiite religious inscription, "Ya Hussein," which invokes the martyrdom of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson in Karbala, Iraq, one of the defining episodes of Shiite history. Noor said that Maya was sold to a brothel in Basra, three hundred and forty miles away, for two million Iraqi dinars—about seventeen hundred dollars—where she was locked in a room with five other girls. Two weeks before my visit, she had been sold for a full night to a man outside the brothel. She waited until he fell asleep, then escaped, borrowed a phone, and called Noor, who told her to come to Bataween by bus. "She was scared because they all know each other, the red-door people and the people in Basra, but she made it here," Noor said.

Since Maya escaped, her pimp has

called Noor several times to demand the return of the money she paid for Maya. The pimps don't know that the sisters are in an apartment just a few streets away. They also don't know what Noor or Sabrine looks like. Noor said that she was not afraid of them, even though she said they have connections to the police. Once, she filed a police report against the brothel, which prompted a call from Maya's pimp. "She told me, 'We know you went to the station and what you said. Do you think they didn't tell us?' Everything I told the police, the woman repeated to me. I told her, 'Fine, if the police won't help, I'll go to the militias.' That scared her."

The anti-trafficking department of the Iraqi police force is situated in a small office within the vast maze of concrete blast walls, topped with coiled razor wire, that divide and subdivide Baghdad's Interior Ministry complex. Since the department opened, in 2012, it has investigated sixty-eight cases of trafficking, most involving foreign-labor exploitation and the illicit organ trade. Captain Haider Naim told me that only five cases involved sex trafficking or prostitution, but he conceded that the figure wasn't reflective of the size of the problem. Naim, who is thirty-five, is one of five officers in the depart-

man-rights activists and nongovernmental organizations seemed to be attacking the problem of sex trafficking more actively than his department was. He noted that the department's director, a brigadier general, had been transferred to Anbar province after Ramadi fell to the Islamic State. "We are doing what we can," he said. "But, you know, the sudden emergencies . . ."

Naim wouldn't say where most of the trafficking was occurring, because it would mean admitting the department's many inadequacies. "I could tell you this area and that area," he said. "And then I'll hear, 'Why didn't you combat it there? Why didn't you post people there?' We don't have the ability to put people in these places. If we did, we would have eliminated these crimes. We would have dismantled them. We don't have the means."

Layla maintains a small network of tipsters whom she pays for information. One afternoon, while we were sipping sugary tea at the home of a mutual friend, she got a call from an acquaintance in Sadr City, an impoverished, mostly Shiite suburb of northeastern Baghdad. A woman had been dragged from her home and shot dead in the street. Layla quickly headed to the scene, insisting that I stay behind, because she didn't know if the situation was safe. The victim was the third woman who had been murdered that week, Layla heard.

From neighbors, Layla learned that the woman had been killed by a man belonging to a militia, although it wasn't clear which one. Nearby brothel owners told her that the woman was a pimp, and that one of her girls had informed a militiaman about her activities. "Sometimes I think it can't be stopped," Layla told me a few days later. When she sees victims, she said, "I feel like my insides are ripped open. I am hurt witnessing this." Still, she would continue her work. "I am now confident and strong," she said. "I know that I am a person, not an animal. My wound, my deep wound, is also my strength, because it makes me help others, to be around these pimps, to take them on. Those who bear scars must help the wounded." ♦



ment; two of them are posted in hospitals to supervise the paperwork for organ transplants.

The department does not have any patrol cars or any officers out on the beat, but several committees meet regularly, and there is a free hot-line number—533—that Naim said was designed to accept reports of trafficking. When I asked a friend to try the number from a cell phone and a landline, it didn't work. I told Naim that hu-

# THE MAN WHO WOULDN'T SIT DOWN

*How Univision's Jorge Ramos earns his viewers' trust.*

BY WILLIAM FINNEGAN

When Jorge Ramos travels in Middle America, nobody recognizes him—until somebody does. Ramos is the evening-news co-anchor on Univision, the country's largest Spanish-language TV network, a job he has held since 1986. A few weeks ago, I was on a flight with him from Chicago to Dubuque. Ramos, who is fifty-seven, is slim, not tall, with white hair and an unassuming demeanor. Wearing jeans, a gray sports coat, and a blue open-collared shirt, he went unremarked. But then, as he disembarked, a fellow-passenger, a stranger in her thirties, drew him aside at the terminal gate, speaking rapidly in Spanish. Ramos bowed his head to listen. The woman was a teacher at a local technical college. Things in this part of Iowa were bad, she said. People were afraid to leave their houses. When they went to Walmart, they only felt comfortable going at night. Ramos nodded. Her voice was urgent. She wiped her eyes. He held her arm while she composed herself. The woman thanked him and rushed away.

"Did you hear that?" he asked, at the car-rental counter. "They only go out to Walmart at night."

In an Italian restaurant on a sleepy corner in downtown Dubuque, a dishwasher came out from the kitchen toward the end of lunch to pay her respects. She, too, fought back tears as she thanked Ramos for his work. He asked her how long she had been in Iowa. Five years, she said. She was from Hidalgo, not far from Mexico City, Ramos's home town. She hurried back to the kitchen.

"We have almost no political representation," Ramos said. He meant Latinos in the United States. "Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz won't defend the undocumented."

"A Country for All," Ramos's most recent book—he has published eleven—is dedicated to "all undocumented immigrants." He was trying to explain

how a journalist finds himself in the role of advocate.

"We're a young community," he said. "You wouldn't expect ABC, or any of the mainstream networks, to take a position on immigration, health care, anything. But at Univision it's different. We are pro-immigrant. That's our audience, and people depend on us. When we are better represented politically, that role for us will recede."

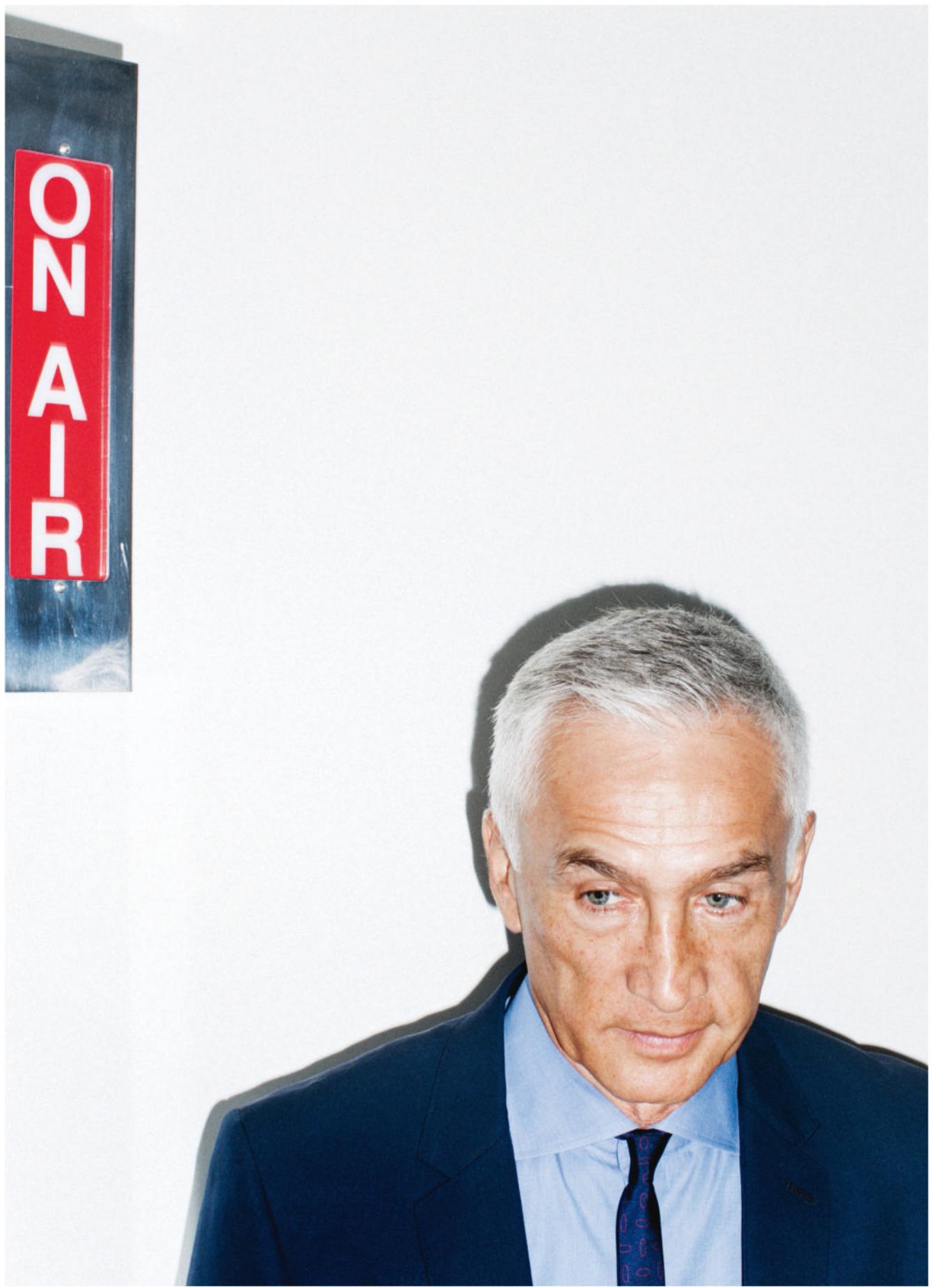
Besides co-anchoring the nightly news, and cranking out books, Ramos hosts a Sunday-morning public-affairs show, "Al Punto" ("To the Point"), and writes a syndicated column; for the past two years, he has also hosted a weekly news-magazine show, "America with Jorge Ramos," in English, on a fledgling network (a joint venture of Univision and ABC) called Fusion. (When Jon Stewart asked him, on "The Daily Show," to account for his hyperactivity, Ramos said, "I'm an immigrant. So I just need to get a lot of jobs.") His English is fluent, if strongly accented. His Spanish, particularly on-air, is carefully neutral—pan-Latino, not noticeably Mexican. Univision's audience comes from many different countries, and the network broadcasts from Miami, where the most common form of Spanish is Cuban.

Ramos occupies a peculiar place in the American news media. He has won eight Emmys and an armload of journalism awards, covered every major story since the fall of the Berlin Wall, and interviewed every American President since George H. W. Bush. (He's interviewed Barack Obama half a dozen times.) But his affiliation can work against him. In June, when he sent a handwritten letter to Donald Trump, who had just launched his Presidential campaign, requesting an interview, it was no dice. Univision had cut its business ties with Trump, including its telecasts of the Miss U.S.A. and Miss Universe beauty pageants, after Trump accused Mexico of sending "rap-

ists" to the United States. Trump posted Ramos's letter on Instagram, crowing that Univision was "begging" him for interviews. The letter included Ramos's personal cell-phone number, which Ramos was then obliged to change. In the weeks that followed, Trump produced a stream of provocative remarks and proposals about Mexicans and immigration, giving the national immigration-policy debate the hardest edge it has had in generations. Now Ramos *really* wanted to interview him.

Trump was planning a rally on Dubuque's riverfront that afternoon. Ramos and Dax Tejera, a young Fusion executive producer, met up with a local cameraman in the parking lot of the Grand River Center, where a press conference was scheduled in advance of the rally. They went inside early, past some tables where Ann Coulter, who was going to introduce Trump at the rally, was setting up to sign copies of her latest book, "*¡Adios, America!: The Left's Plan to Turn Our Country Into a Third World Hellhole*." Ramos, heading upstairs, said, "We had her on our show when that book came out. Trump seems to be getting his ideas from her."

In the room designated for the press conference, Ramos and Tejera considered camera angles and lighting. They staked out a pair of front-row seats. Ramos was studying a sheaf of notes. "Normally, I'd just have a ten-second question prepared," he said. "But this is not normal. Here I have to make a statement, as an indignant immigrant. Tell him that Latinos despise him. And then I have to ask a question, as a journalist, if he'll let me." The room was filling with reporters. Ramos worried that Trump would recognize him and not call on him. "It will be important to stand up," he said. "Trump's street-smart. If you're sitting, he'll use it, the visual power imbalance, and squash you." Tejera stationed the cameraman against a



*As a news anchor, Ramos serves as both a reporter and an advocate. "My only weapon is the question," he says.*

wall. "TV is not reality," Ramos said, miming a frame with his hands. "It's a way of exaggerating a moment. Reality is what we're living here. What we're after is something else."

Trump arrived, with a phalanx of aides. He walked to a waist-high lectern decorated with a Trump poster and said, "Hello, everybody, how are you? Carl?"

Carl Cameron, of Fox News, asked about a local campaign operative who was leaving Rick Perry's campaign for Trump's. The operative joined Trump at the lectern for a couple of questions. Then, as Trump stepped back to the microphone alone, Ramos stood up. "Mr. Trump, I have a question about immigration," he said. Trump ignored him, scanning the room as if no one had spoken, saying, "O.K., who's next?" He pointed at someone. "Yeah. Please."

Ramos persisted. "Mr. Trump, I have a question."

Trump turned and said, "Excuse me. Sit down. You weren't called. Sit down. Sit down."

Ramos remained standing.

"Sit down." The sneer in Trump's tone was startling.

"No, Mr. Trump," Ramos said, his

voice level. "I'm a reporter, an immigrant, a U.S. citizen. I have the right to ask a question."

"No, you don't," Trump said, sharply. "You haven't been called. Go back to Univision."

Ramos: "Mr. Trump, you cannot deport eleven million people. You cannot build a nineteen-hundred-mile wall."

Trump began scanning the room again. Reporters were raising their hands. Trump pointed at one.

"You cannot deny citizenship to children in this country," Ramos continued.

Trump turned to his left and seemed to give a signal, a kind of duck-lipped kissing or sucking expression. A bodyguard with a buzz cut started to cross the stage. "Go ahead," Trump muttered to him.

The bodyguard went for Ramos, who was still talking. "Those ideas—" The bodyguard, who was a foot taller than Ramos, began to push him backward, out of the room. "I'm a reporter," Ramos said. "Don't touch me, sir." His voice did not rise. "You cannot touch me." The bodyguard had him by the left arm and was now moving him swiftly toward an exit door.

While Ramos was getting the bum's rush, Trump called on a reporter. "Yes, go ahead."

"Thank you, Mr. Trump. Chip Reid, with CBS."

"Hi, Chip. Yes?"

"Roger Ailes says you need to apologize to Megyn Kelly. Will you do that?"

"No, I wouldn't do that. She actually should be apologizing to me."

The door swung shut behind Ramos, who still held his notes.

In the hallway outside, a middle-aged white man, his face flushed with anger, approached Ramos, jabbing a finger at him. "Get out of my country," he said. "Get out." The man had a Trump sticker on his lapel. Ramos studied him curiously. "I'm a U.S. citizen, too," he said, moving toward the man, as if he wanted to talk. A police officer stepped between them.

Tejera was on the phone to his boss at Fusion. Ramos, standing alone, seemed to fold into himself. His expulsion had been tense, uncomfortable, heart-pounding stuff. Everyone involved was surely agitated. But Ramos seemed calm, as if his pulse had slowed. A young woman with a news camera approached him for an interview. Perhaps later, he said. Ramos crossed his arms and stared at his shoes. He was wearing pale, low-cut boots. His feet looked very small. I later asked him what he was thinking about then. "I was trying to understand what it meant," he said. "Trying to know if I had made mistakes. I knew it was right not to sit down. If I had sat down, Latinos would have been so disappointed."

After about ten minutes, a Trump aide, a young woman in black, appeared and walked toward Ramos. "I'm Hope," she said, smiling and extending a hand, which he took. She invited him to return to the press conference, assuring him that he could ask questions. He just had to wait to be called on. Ramos went back in.

While he was outside, two reporters had asked Trump about his ejection. The first, Tom Llamas, of ABC, was a young Latino correspondent from Miami. He described Ramos as "one of our country's top journalists," and asked Trump if he thought he had handled the situation correctly. Trump said, "I don't know really much about him." He only knew he hadn't called on the guy.

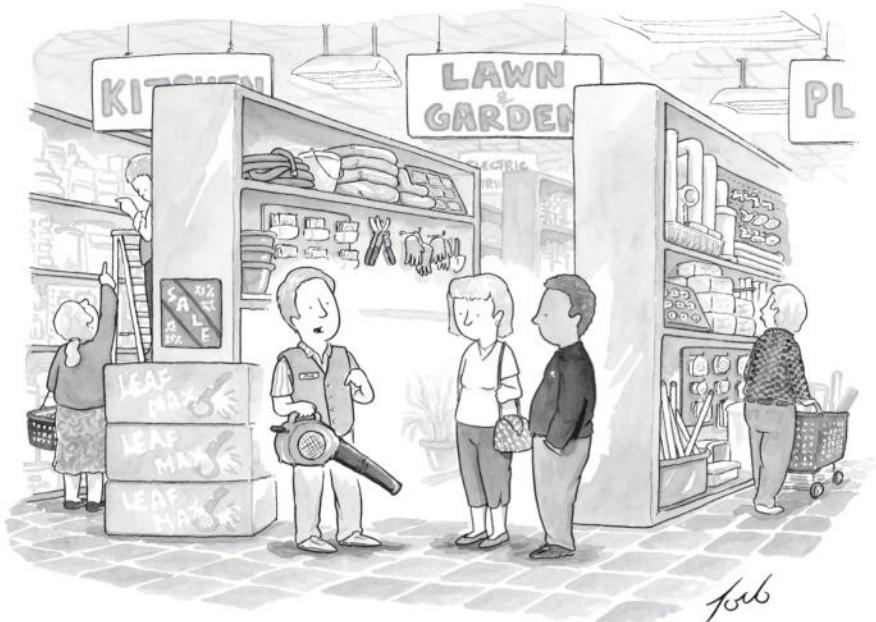


*"I'm so nervous—my cat is here to see the play."*

"He just stands up and starts screaming," Trump said. Anyway, he said, he hadn't thrown him out: "You'll have to talk to security. Whoever security is escorted him out."

Now Trump called on Ramos, who asked his questions about the wall, birth-right citizenship, and mass deportation. How was Trump actually going to do these things? Did he plan to use the Army to round up eleven million people? "We're going to do it in a very humane fashion," Trump said. "I have a bigger heart than you do." The two men talked over each other, with Ramos still asking for specifics. Trump now seemed to know who Ramos was. "You and I will talk," he said. "We're going to be talking a lot over the years." He meant, it seemed, when he was President. "Do you know how many Hispanics work for me?" Trump asked. "They love me."

The exaggerated TV moment, I guessed, was "Go back to Univision." It sounded like "Go back to Mexico." Trump, rehashing the episode on the "Today" show, called Ramos a "madman." He told a cheering crowd in Nashville about how he had dealt with the "screaming and ranting" of "this clown, Jose Reyes, or whatever the hell his name is." The media critic Howard Kurtz, of Fox News, said that Ramos had behaved "like a heckler," contravening "basic civility" by not waiting to be called on. Marc Caputo, of Politico, assailed Ramos's open support for immigration reform, tweeting, "This is bias: taking the news personally, explicitly advocating an agenda." Many conservative commentators, at Fox and elsewhere, agreed. A Washington Post writer called Ramos a "conflict junkie"—like Trump himself. Ramos had his defenders. Glenn Greenwald wrote a piece for The Intercept with the headline "Jorge Ramos Commits Journalism, Gets Immediately Attacked by Journalists." Greenwald and others pointed to a distinguished tradition of opinion and advocacy in American journalism, running from Thomas Paine through Edward R. Murrow. For those with little patience for the numbing rituals of the modern press conference, Ramos's insistence on making unwelcome points had been refreshing, and it was Trump's heavy-handed response that was worrisome. Certainly, the questions raised by Ramos had been unusually serious and substan-



*"When it comes to blowing leaves around uselessly and creating an insane amount of noise, this model can't be beat."*

tial at a press event otherwise dominated by talk of poll numbers, campaign operatives, and personal spats.

Ramos's problem with authority began, in Mexico, with priests. The Benedictine fathers who taught him at school, he said, were reactionary sadists. "They hit us with shoes. They were pulling us from the hair," he told me, demonstrating with a twisting temple-area hair grab. He is anticlerical to this day. His father, an architect, was rigid and unyielding, and wanted Jorge, his oldest son, to become an architect, a lawyer, a doctor, or an engineer. "It was the same in the country as a whole, with each President imposed by his predecessor, not elected," Ramos said. "I felt like I had three huge authority figures imposing their rules on me from the time I was a child." Ramos defied his father and majored in communications in college, working at a travel agency and a radio station. He got interested in journalism and, after graduation, switched to television, becoming a news writer and then an on-air reporter. His employer was Televisa, Mexico's largest media conglomerate. Once, for a story about Mexican political psychology, Ramos interviewed people critical of

the government. But Televisa was slavishly loyal to the Mexican government, and, Ramos said, "My boss was horrified. He told me, 'No son de la casa'—they are not our people. "He completely changed my story, and I resigned in protest. I wish I still had the letter I wrote."

We were eating sushi in a crowded little Venezuelan restaurant in Doral, Florida, near Miami's airport and Univision's news studios. "Ask any immigrant about arriving here," Ramos said, waving his chopsticks. "They can tell you the exact date, time, circumstances, everything they first noticed." He arrived in 1983, shortly after quitting Televisa. He had sold his first car, a VW Beetle, to buy a plane ticket to Los Angeles. "I still have the guitar I carried through the airport. I was twenty-four, almost completely broke, with everything I owned in one bag. I had a student visa, and I remember thinking, This is freedom. You can carry everything you own." He studied television and journalism in an extension course at U.C.L.A., working part time as a waiter and at a movie house. Then he got his first job in American journalism, as a reporter at KMEX, a Spanish-language TV station that operated out of an old house on Melrose Avenue. "We did three stories a day from



the street. It was the best possible training. I did hundreds of stories there."

KMEX was also Ramos's introduction to the community role that the Spanish-language media fills, and is expected to fill, in the United States. The station sponsored health fairs and job fairs, and broadcast English lessons. People called the station to ask which school to send their children to, which doctor to go to. "That TV is your window into the new world you're in, where you don't have many friends," a Cuban-American media consultant in Coral Gables told me. "Those stations are more than information sources. They're certainly more than businesses. The on-air personalities become like old friends. If you get ripped off, you don't call the cops, you call Univision or Telemundo. They have these watchdog shows—here in Miami, it's 'El 23 a Tu Lado' ['23 on Your Side']. That's activist journalism."

KMEX was owned by the Spanish International Network, which later became Univision. In 1985, Ramos began hosting a morning show, in addition to his reporting, and a company executive, visiting Los Angeles, happened to see

it. "Rosita Peru," Ramos recalled. "She invited me to come to Miami to start a national morning show. I said, 'Sure.' I moved, and I did that show for eleven months. It was so difficult. There was no script. It was a lot of improvising on-air. Two hours a day. I wanted to be doing news. But I never even saw the people in the news operations. They would just be coming to work as I was crawling out the door."

Univision had a Mexican flavor—it had been launched as a subsidiary of Televisa, and the bulk of its programming was, and still is, telenovelas made by Televisa. About a year after Ramos got to Miami, Televisa's owner, Emilio Azcárraga Milmo, a formidable monopolist known as El Tigre, made a move on Univision's news department. The plan was to install Jacobo Zabludovsky, Televisa's main news anchor, as the director of Univision's news operations. Zabludovsky, a reedy government mouth-piece with rectangular eyeglasses, was one of the most famous men in Mexico, although he is now remembered for having opened a newscast in October, 1968, after the police and the military had mas-

sacred scores of protesting students in the plaza at Tlatelolco, in Mexico City, by intoning, "Today was a sunny day."

Zabludovsky came to Miami, arriving at Univision's modest studios in a black limousine. His meeting with the news department did not go well. There was a newsroom revolt. Besides the prospect of a journalistic calamity—the imposition of Mexican-style censorship—there was, according to Ramos, the Cuba-Mexico problem. Mexico recognized Fidel Castro's regime—indeed, the two countries enjoyed warm relations—which made the Mexican government anathema to many of South Florida's Cuban exiles. The *Miami Herald* sharply questioned the Televisa takeover of Univision's news department. To make matters worse, Zabludovsky had accompanied Castro on his march into Havana during the revolution, providing enthusiastic coverage. The misbegotten plan to install Zabludovsky was finally scuttled when most of the Univision news department simply quit. El Tigre was soon forced by federal authorities to sell his stake in Univision under a law forbidding foreign ownership of broadcast stations.

The skeleton crew that remained at Univision needed, among other things, a nightly-news anchor. "So they went and found the only on-air male still on the premises," Ramos recalled. That was the skinny kid on the morning show, the *güerito*. "I didn't even know how to read a teleprompter, which in those days was just a roll of paper that constantly jammed." He got help from an experienced co-anchor, Teresa Rodriguez. "Teresa saved me. She had blood-red fingernails and she used to run her nail down the backup script on our desk, to help me keep my place." Rodriguez went on maternity leave—she now co-hosts a Sunday-evening news-magazine show, "Aquí y Ahora" ("Here and Now")—and Ramos ended up co-anchoring with María Elena Salinas, a dynamic newscaster from L.A. whom Ramos had first met at KMEX. The two of them clicked. Twenty-seven years later, they are still working side by side, and are the best-known newscasters, perhaps the best-known faces, among the fifty-five million Latinos now in the United States.

Salinas has also won a slew of journalism awards, including, in 2012, an

Emmy for lifetime achievement and, earlier this year, a Peabody for a special on the exodus of Central American children to the United States.

**M**iami was quite different when he first arrived, Ramos said. "It wasn't always easy to be Mexican here. Cubans ran the place. They understood how the system worked. They had the Cold War policy that said that any Cuban who made it to the U.S. was automatically legal. There were no undocumented Cubans. Local mass media focussed on Fidel, and people were suspicious of any other point of view. I had trouble just because I was Mexican. But then the city began to change, to diversify, first with Central American immigrants fleeing the civil wars there. Next came the Colombians, getting away from the cocaine wars. Then came the Venezuelans, running from Hugo Chávez."

As a Univision co-anchor, Ramos found that he had the media weight to arrange interviews with heads of state, particularly in Latin America. It was also part of his mandate. His viewers were hungry for news from their home countries. Ramos wanted an interview with Castro, but Castro granted very few, and those were given to sympathetic journalists. So Ramos contrived to encounter him outside a hotel in Guadalajara, Mexico, where he was attending an Ibero-American summit, in 1991. With his camera rolling, Ramos, calling Castro "Comandante," asked him if Marxism was not a museum piece. Castro slowed and put his arm around Ramos's shoulders and said he didn't think so. Marxism was young, while capitalism was three thousand years old. Ramos eluded Castro's arm, acutely aware that it compromised him as a reporter and that the Cubans in Miami would never forgive him if he let it stay there—something Castro himself probably knew quite well, Ramos thought. Castro's bodyguards moved in. Ramos quickly asked another question, about the fall of the Berlin Wall. Castro countered with a reference to the modest wall then being built by the United States along the Mexican border, and put his hand on Ramos's shoulder. Ramos then pointed out that many people believed that it was time for Castro to hold a *plebiscito* in Cuba—a referendum on

his rule. Castro responded politely, but Ramos had gone too far. Castro's bodyguards edged him out of the way. Ramos lost his balance and fell down. Castro kept walking, saying nothing, and didn't look back. The interview had lasted a minute and three seconds.

Univision now covers Cuba as a matter of course. Ramos never did get a formal interview with Fidel, but in 1998 he went to Cuba to cover the visit of Pope John Paul II. He tried to convey the country's complexity in his dispatches, but he ignored the advice of government minders not to give too much attention to dissidents, and he has been blackballed ever since.

María Elena Salinas told me that, in his interviews with Latin-American leaders, Ramos used to routinely ask, "Is Fidel a dictator?" She laughed. "People would say, 'Why are you always asking the same question?' It was because he wanted these heads of state on the record." His other standard question with Presidents, she said, is "How much money do you have?" "He likes to ask it when they first come into office, and then a second time, a few years later, if they agree to talk again, to see how much they've been stealing."

Ramos's questions often infuriate his interviewees. In Bogotá, in 1996, he demanded that the Colombian President, Ernesto Samper, explicitly state whether or not his election campaign had accepted drug money, and showed Samper



a photograph in which he appeared with two alleged narco-traffickers. Samper was annoyed. Ramos and his crew had already received death threats after a prior interview with Samper, and they fled the country on the first available flight. Ramos calls Miami *mi trinchera*—his foxhole, into which he can jump when there is trouble. As a child of Mexico, he says, he never takes for granted the protections he enjoys as an American. (He became a citizen in 2008.)

In a 1994 interview with Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the deeply feared Mexican President, Ramos asked Salinas if he had gained office by fraud, as many Mexicans believed. Ramos pressed him on regional vote totals that were mathematically impossible. He questioned Salinas closely about the murder, a few months earlier, of his anointed successor, Luis Donaldo Colosio. (Salinas moved to Ireland after his term ended, amid persistent reports that he did so to avoid murder charges in the Colosio case.) "It was unbelievable that I could sit there and confront him with the evidence of fraud," Ramos told me, "and then ask him about the *dedazo*"—"the big finger," with which Mexican Presidents traditionally chose their successors. "In those days, and in the country where I grew up, no Mexican journalist could even speak that word, *dedazo*, in an interview with the President and still have a job when he got home."

One of Ramos's models is Oriana Fallaci, the fiery Italian journalist. "I read her book 'Interview with History' in college," he said. "I loved how she took on the Shah, Qaddafi, Kissinger. She saw the interview as a little war, with a winner. For certain interviews, I see it the same way. My only weapon is the question. And, living here, it's not risky. I can make powerful people angry, and show our audience what they really are, and then go home and live a normal life."

Home is in Coral Gables, where Ramos lives with his girlfriend, Chiquinquirá Delgado, a Venezuelan actress, who co-hosts a Univision reality show called "Nuestra Belleza Latina" ("Our Latin Beauty"). He has two children from two marriages, and his younger child, Nicolas, a high-school junior, still lives with him. Delgado's five-year-old daughter rounds out the household.

In the sushi place, our waiter, a tall young Venezuelan, told Ramos that he had decided to apply for U.S. citizenship. Ramos congratulated him. "I realized I have to do it," the young man said. "If we can't vote, then we have no way to fight back against people like Trump."

Ramos can't get over the fact that the most trusted voices in mainstream TV news, as far as he's concerned, are comedians: Jon Stewart, John Oliver, Stephen Colbert. Ramos and Oliver

have joked together on-air about being immigrants, defeated by telephone voice-recognition systems that force them to adopt American accents to make themselves understood. Stewart accused Ramos of stealing his material when Ramos got big laughs on “The Daily Show” with lines about the Latino demographic boom. When Ramos urged Colbert, on “The Colbert Report,” to consider “co-responsibility” for undocumented immigration, since, as he said, “They’re here because we are hiring them, and we benefit from their work,” Colbert paused, seemed to go almost out of character, and finally said, “I don’t have a comeback for that, so we’re probably going to edit it out of the interview.” Ramos thinks that the best political comedians, with their fake news and stone-faced parody, are trusted because they offer, at bottom, “transparency” about their own views, rather than simply a straight news report that viewers have come to know is often riddled with false equivalencies in pursuit of “balance.” (“Others, however, insist the earth is flat.”)

Ramos does not have a trust problem with his audience. Freddy Balsera, a media analyst and political consultant specializing in Latino affairs, told me, “We do polls. We ask, ‘Who is the most influential Hispanic in the U.S.? Over and over, Jorge comes out No. 1.’ Sonia Sotomayor, the Supreme Court Justice, comes in first in other polls. Among institutions, Univision comes in second on the trust meter with Latinos, behind the Catholic Church.

“People grew up with Jorge,” Gabriela Tristán, a Univision executive producer, told me. “You watched him with your parents, your grandparents. Him and María Elena. Whatever they say, it’s the law.”

Balsera thought that Ramos’s run-in with Donald Trump in Iowa had enhanced his standing among Latinos. “But why doesn’t Marco Rubio challenge Trump?” he said. “Or Ted Cruz? Why does Jorge Ramos have to defend our culture, our community?”

Some Latino conservatives disapproved of Ramos’s dustup. Ruben Navarrette, Jr., a syndicated columnist, accused him of being “unprofessional” and “playing into every negative stereotype that Americans subscribe to about Mex-

icans.” Then, there are the mainstream dismissals of Ramos as a lightweight, a niche performer, a “heckler.” Ramos appeared on “The O’Reilly Factor” shortly after the event in Iowa, and the segment began with Bill O’Reilly asking, “Anchor or activist?” O’Reilly urged Ramos to stop calling himself a reporter. Ramos replied, “I don’t think you’re the right person to lecture me on advocacy and journalism.” He went on to draw a distinction between being partisan and being independent. O’Reilly is effectively a Republican Party partisan, he argued.

Alfonso Aguilar, who used to have a radio show on Univision, where he considered himself a “token conservative,” deplores the liberal bias of Univision, and thinks that “Spanish-language media is not being held to the same standards as mainstream media” when it comes to distinguishing between reporting and opinion. Ramos and María Elena Salinas are both at fault, according to Aguilar, “because you’re manipulating audiences if you don’t clarify.” Aguilar, who worked for the George W. Bush Administration and is now the executive director of the American Principles Project’s Latino Partnership, in Washington, D.C., still appears on Univision programs, including “Al Punto,” but he says that Univision correspondents in bureaus across the country complain to him, privately, that they get a bad rap because of editorializing by anchors in Miami.

Ramos has had combative interviews with President Obama. During the 2008 campaign, he extracted a promise from Obama that an immigration-reform bill would be pushed forward during his first year in the White House. In a 2012 interview, Ramos, although appearing live on Univision, switched to English and said, “It was a promise, Mr. President. . . . I don’t want it to get lost in translation. . . . A promise is a promise. And, with all due respect, you didn’t keep that promise.” Obama looked miserable; Ramos hasn’t been markedly easier on him in more recent interviews. Last December, Ramos reminded the President that he had become known among Latinos as “the Deporter-in-Chief.” Yet Obama, along with every other national politician with an interest in reaching Latino voters, knows

that Ramos and Salinas are the gateway. Randy Falco, the president and chief executive of Univision, is a Republican. He told me that, during the 2012 general election, he pleaded with Mitt Romney to appear on the network, and that Romney obliged him only once. That appearance did not go well, and Romney did not come back. But he later told Falco that staying away was a mistake: had he made more appearances on Univision, he might conceivably have improved his disastrous Election Day showing among Latinos.

Ramos’s daughter, Paola, who recently earned a degree from Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, has a job on the Hillary Clinton campaign. She previously worked in the Obama White House, and for Jill Biden. Ramos insists that his daughter’s employment does not influence his work. His Republican critics don’t buy it. He did not disclose her work for the Obama Administration to his audience. He did disclose her position with the Clinton campaign. He may have to recuse himself from any Univision-sponsored campaign debates that include Hillary Clinton.

Univision, though obscure to most non-Spanish speakers, plays in the big leagues. In 2013 and 2014, for what are known as the July prime-time sweeps, its audience was larger than that of each of the four main English-language networks. Its original programming is sold throughout the Spanish-speaking world. (The U.S. now has more Spanish speakers than Spain does.) Its local stations in New York and Los Angeles are consistently near the top of the ratings in those cities. On the news side, the network is far more cosmopolitan than its English-language counterparts, starting with its employees. Patsy Loris, the senior news director, is Chilean; Sabrina Zambrano-Orr, the executive producer of “Al Punto,” is Venezuelan; Teresa Rodriguez is Cuban; Isaac Lee, the president for news and digital, is Colombian; and so on. The coverage of international news, especially in Latin America, is decidedly more thorough and energetic than what the English-language broadcast networks provide.

Fusion, which launched in October, 2013, has hired away a number of executives and journalists from the

SHOWCASE BY JASON FULFORD



COURTESY ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES AND J&L BOOKS

Between 1961 and 1983, the artist Harry Smith picked up two hundred and fifty-one paper airplanes off the streets of New York. He annotated most of them with handwritten details of when and where they were found.

networks in New York, including Keith Summa, a longtime producer at ABC News, who, more recently, headed the investigative unit at CBS News. In the Univision newsroom, Summa told me, "It's not uncommon for me to ask, 'Who's that guy?,' and then to be told, 'Oh, he had to flee X country.' These folks come from a culture where journalism is a contact sport. Here we worry that we're going to get sued, not shot." Describing the contrast with his old workplaces, Summa said, "People would come in to us at ABC with these minute-by-minute ratings, saying, 'Oh, when the overweight person comes in, the dial goes down, and when the good-looking person is on it's up.' Is this really how we're supposed to do journalism? Also, the left-right thing that dominates mainstream political reporting isn't that relevant here. At Univision, it's more north-south. I find that refreshing. And, of course, Jorge just calls it as he sees it. He says, 'When you've got the facts, you don't need to balance with non-facts.' There's a groupthink in the Bermuda Triangle of the three big networks, but Jorge doesn't go to those cocktail parties."

Isaac Lee, who is also the chief executive of Fusion, asked me if I knew who Ramos's agent and lawyer were. I didn't. "It's him," he said. "Jorge. We negotiate his contracts right at this table. It takes fifteen minutes."

When Fusion launched, Ramos was nervous about working in English. At first, he had a nightly news show, which began an hour after his Univision newscast ended. With his Sunday-morning show and his other gigs, the workload was unmanageable—he had so much script to write, and spent so many hours on set, that he could barely leave the studio to report stories. He soon cut back to the weekly show, "America with Jorge Ramos." Fusion's target audience was initially meant to be young, English-dominant Latinos, but such viewers didn't want or need their own network, and the target demographic was expanded to Millennials (ages eighteen to thirty-four) of any ethnicity. The Fusion cable channel offers a mixture of news and entertain-

ment, with heavy emphases on pop culture, the drug war, sex, and viral videos—and a small number of programs in heavy rotation. Fusion's Web site, which launched in February, has a greater range and number of offerings, but will not soon be worrying competitors like Gawker and BuzzFeed. The digital content is available on many platforms—Instagram, Snapchat, Vine, Apple TV—and the company recently hired Alexis Madrigal away from *The Atlantic*'s Web site to be its editor-in-chief. Fusion TV is available in forty million homes, but is not carried by Comcast or Time Warner, and it does not subscribe to the Nielsen ratings service, which is probably for the best. The company lost thirty-five million dollars in 2014, its first full year in business.

"America with Jorge Ramos" stands out from everything else on Fusion, partly because its host is decades older than anyone else at the network, but mainly because of its quality. Ramos has done specials from Israel and the West Bank (about young people and the wall there), and from Puerto Rico. He is always looking for new ways to address the immigration story. The style of his dispatches, and those of the young correspondents on "America," is decidedly more handheld and helter-skelter, in the general vein of Vice News, than his work for Univision. In one stunt for Fusion, Ramos swam the Rio Grande, at a not-narrow point, fully clothed, gasping for air while trying to narrate. Still, the journalistic standard remains high, from what I've seen, and Ramos considers it a big step that clips of his work are immediately available, without translation, to the large number of Americans (and the media élites) who don't speak Spanish. "It's like

we were just talking to ourselves before, to fellow-Latinos, in a parallel world," he said. "This is a breakthrough." With technical help from digital producers, he has thrown himself into social media, generating a steady stream of tweets and Facebook posts, including popular videos (millions of views) that he writes and shoots with a single camera in newsroom hallways when inspiration strikes.



In May, Ann Coulter appeared on Ramos's Fusion show. They taped the interview in front of a live audience, and Coulter's eagerness to give offense was breathtaking. At one point, she said, "I have a little tip. If you don't want to be killed by ISIS, don't go to Syria. If you don't want to be killed by a Mexican, there's nothing I can tell you." Ramos likes to say that silence is death on TV, but at that moment he said nothing. The audience, too, seemed shocked into silence. After a long, awkward pause, Coulter went on, "Very easy to avoid being killed by ISIS. Don't fly to Syria." Ramos finally asked, "Are you really saying . . . ? We're talking about forty million immigrants in this country." Coulter, arguing for an end to immigration, talked about how certain "cultures" from which large numbers of people immigrate to the U.S. "are obviously deficient," making cryptic reference to "uncles raping their nieces." It was, in its way, good TV.

Ramos looks forward to the Latinization of the United States. "We were fifteen million when I got here," he said. "Now we're fifty-five million. By 2050, we'll be more than a hundred million." Converting those numbers to real political power is slow going. Univision and its smaller rival, Telemundo, along with many other organizations, sponsor voter-registration drives, but Latinos still punch well below their demographic weight in registration and voter turnout. Ramos is an evangelist for Latino political power. "Our turn is coming," he told me. "And the attitude is changing, especially since Barack Obama was elected. I go out on publicity tours for my books, and, you know Latinos, they bring everybody in the family to everything, even little kids. So I always ask the kids, 'Who wants to be the first Latino President?' It used to be no hands went up, or maybe one or two. Now, with Obama, many of the little hands go up. It will happen in my lifetime. I hope to be able to cover the Inauguration. I don't care if it's a Republican or a Democrat. It could even be Rubio or Cruz." Both have been on his show.

Ramos, and Latino voters generally, appreciated the effort that George W. Bush made to reach them, particularly his support for immigration reform,

even though it proved fruitless. Bush received forty per cent of the Latino vote in 2004. Ramos strongly endorses the conventional wisdom that no party can now win the White House with less than a third of the Latino vote. There is, however, a counterargument. California and Texas, the big states with the largest Latino populations, will not be in play in next year's election, and most of the likely swing states have few Latino voters. The exceptions are Florida, Colorado, and Nevada, which have forty-four electoral votes combined. Florida, where Cubans and Puerto Ricans greatly outnumber Mexicans, is a special case, and not all electoral-vote strategists agree that Latinos will be a decisive factor in Colorado or Nevada.

Still, Ramos and his Univision colleagues find that national politicians are finally starting to come to them. Patsy Loris, who has been producing Ramos's programs since the nineteen-eighties, told me, "It was always difficult. Every time we would ask for a sound bite in Spanish, we would get the assistant to the assistant to the assistant." Ramos was sometimes able to get big interviews, but only in election years. "That's changing now, thank God," Loris said. "I think Jorge going on Fusion helps. But people who are just discovering him, they don't realize, he's always been exactly like this. He was never traditional. That was why he left Mexico."

Loris's office is along one wall of an enormous newsroom that Univision shares with Fusion and the local station, WLTW. Ramos was three doors down, banging out introductions for segments on "Al Punto," which was taping that afternoon. María Elena Salinas was on the far side of Ramos. Along the other walls were control rooms, editing suites, and three TV studios; the rest of the open-plan floor was filled with desks where hundreds of people worked. Each desk had at least two large monitors, and nearly every chair was draped with a shawl, a sweater, a sweatshirt, or a coat—somehow, on a ninety-five-degree day, the vast space, two stories high and a hundred and fifty thousand square feet, was kept meat-locker cold. A dozen news channels were being projected on the walls.

I camped out in Ramos's office while



*"I'm still hungry."*

he finished writing intros. There was no clutter. A little corkboard in the corner of his desk with tacked-up photographs of his kids and girlfriend. A vertical book stand in the opposite corner. A computer, before which he rolled his shoulders and clicked away. That was it. The only thing on the walls was a glass board on which a few dates and names were scribbled: "O'Reilly," "Arpaio," "Bill Maher," "DC/Papa." Those were upcoming gigs or stories. Ramos wears no jewelry, not even a watch or a ring—an uncommon presentation for a man in Miami. He keeps his hair short. He dresses simply, in jeans and an oxford shirt, tries to travel with only a carry-on bag, and hates wearing a suit—though he dons one every night for the newscast. He even somehow maintains an empty e-mail in-box. Salinas and I had been comparing overstuffed in-boxes. We both had thousands of unopened messages. Ramitos, as she calls him, had zero. Each time I e-mailed him, he answered quickly. It was unnatural.

Salinas said that, in twenty-seven years of working together, often under ferocious deadlines, she had never heard Ramos shout. "Things bother him, but he doesn't yell and get mad," she said. "I've never known anybody as disciplined as he is. Jorge can multitask like a woman. Very few men can do that. He's flexible—he knows how to pick

his battles—but he's also incredibly stubborn." She shook her head. "We know each other so well, we can read each other's mind. On the air, we never interrupt each other. We know that if one of us is incapacitated—choking, forgetting something—the other will pick up."

TV news is live performance—part journalism and part theatre. The line between journalism and entertainment is blurred in other reporting genres, but TV is the closest to pure show business. In a cynical view, news is just another entertainment product among the many that Univision sells, and Jorge Ramos is a character, a "brand," who brings profits to the corporation. Exposing corruption, confronting bigots, championing immigrants—these performances are hugely popular. "They help to protect an enormous market," Tomás López-Pumarejo, a professor at Brooklyn College, points out. And the topic of immigration is a proven ratings winner on Univision.

I have never heard Ramos say a cynical word. His zeal and outrage seem deeply felt, genuine. But I did notice, after the Trump press conference in Iowa, as Ramos was leaving the convention center, that he briefly crossed paths with Ann Coulter, who was preparing to introduce Trump at the rally. She seemed surprised to see Ramos, but

unfazed. Not a word was said. They were two troupers, old pros, busy plowing their respective rows. They swerved toward each other and exchanged a quick fist bump in passing.

Later, I watched Ramos pacing on a levee above the Mississippi River in the twilight, talking on his cell phone, pondering his next move. Because of the Trump confrontation, he had already shot to the top of global “trending topics” on Twitter. He knew, as a newsman, that he shouldn’t step on the story. Interview requests were pouring in; he was turning down nearly all of them. He had already done a short, straightforward standup outside the convention center—in English for Fusion, in Spanish for Univision. He decided to talk the next morning, before dawn, Iowa time, to George Stephanopoulos, on “Good Morning America.” Since ABC is a co-owner of Fusion, a corporate obligation accrued there. Then, he thought, he would do Megyn Kelly’s show on Fox News. She, too, had been ill used by Trump. Other than that, he should probably let the story run on its own steam. Were these the calculations of a celebrity, a performer, or a journalist? Did those distinctions matter at that moment?

Ramos finished writing his intros, sent them to a teleprompter file, did a phone interview with a Venezuelan radio station, and announced that he was ready to leave. We took his car to a Thai place in Doral for takeout. The Univision news studios are in a light-industrial park—a huge gray fea-

tureless box among long, pastel-facaded warehouses with uninformative names slapped over doors and truck bays: Avcom Technik, Nutritional Power Center, Trans-Air Systems, Inc. “That guy I was talking to in Venezuela, Nelson Bocaranda, is amazing,” Ramos said. “A great reporter. He always has sources. He even had a source among Chávez’s doctors.” That was a hard-news reporter talking. “But all the traditional media spaces are closed there now, so they’re using the Internet to do independent journalism. It’s incredibly courageous.”

The Thai place was in a strip mall. Ramos greeted people at nearly every table, all in Spanish. “Miami has been incredibly generous to Latinos,” he told me. “As one of my first bosses here told me, ‘It’s the only city in America where we’re not treated as second-class citizens.’”

Over lunch, I asked Ramos to name the most edifying story he has covered. “Probably the Mexican election in 2000,” he said. “I thought I was going to die with the PRI still in power.” The Institutional Revolutionary Party ruled Mexico for seventy-one years, ending in 2000. “On Election Day, we started playing soccer in the Zócalo, the Univision crew, as a way of celebrating. We were surrounded by soldiers and cops. This was precisely the regime I had been running from. All the efforts of hundreds of thousands of Mexicans had paid off.” Unfortunately, the Mexican governments since 2000 have proved a terrible disappointment. The PRI is back in power now, and Ramos has been hammering the leadership for its corruption and in-

competence. Meanwhile, he says, Mexican journalists who have exposed corruption have been rewarded by being fired, if not far worse.

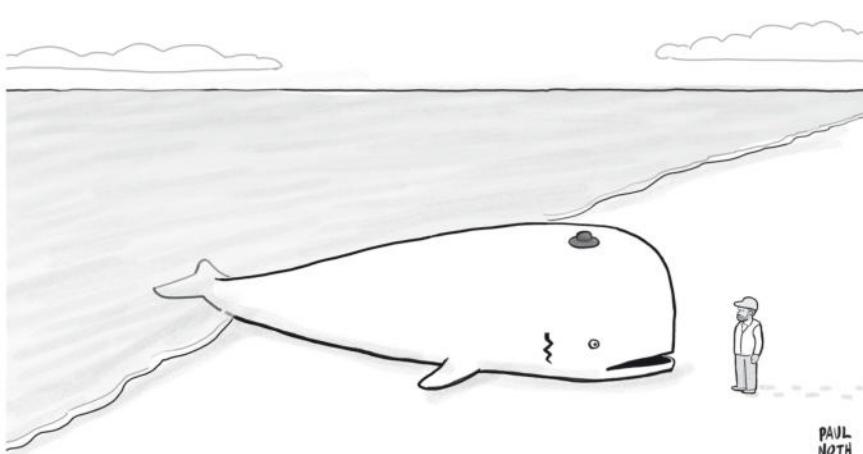
Back at the studio, we ran into Chi-quinchirá Delgado. She was about to go on the air, and was wearing high heels that caused her to tower over Ramos. Delgado became a celebrity as a teenager, when she was first runner-up in the 1990 Miss Venezuela pageant; she went on to become a model and then a soap-opera star. I asked if her life in Venezuela had required bodyguards. It had, she said. Her life here was far more relaxed. She and Ramos rode bicycles, went to the supermarket. Then it was showtime; she smiled apologetically and hurried off. Seeing Delgado with Ramos on the set—probably the best-looking couple in Florida, if not North America—reignited my print hack’s distrust of TV stardom. Later, watching him on a Fusion set, waiting for the cameras to roll, I was struck by how physically different from the rest of us he seemed. The crew scurried around, lugging heavy equipment, muttering under headsets. We were all in shadow. The lights found Ramos’s calm, chiselled features, his clear gray eyes gazing into the middle distance. Then the technical director, a young African-American woman in a scruffy T-shirt and a backward ball cap, said, “O.K., we’re ready. Jorge, please sit down.”

“For you, I will sit down,” he said.

The sheer quantity of multitasking—there is no other word for it—in Ramos’s workday is phenomenal. He is taping, writing, interviewing, making his arguments about the lineup and the order of the evening’s segments in the big three-o’clock news meeting; or going live, nonstop, back to back. That morning, he said, he had written a column about air-conditioning and climate change—the perversity of the status conferred by rendering buildings ice cold in hot places like Miami and Puerto Rico. The column, distributed by the New York Times Syndicate, would appear in more than thirty papers in the U.S. and Latin America. “But not till next week,” Ramos said, “when this Trump news cycle will have turned.”

And now the Pope was coming to America. This Pope’s first language is Spanish. Might he score an interview?

Not a chance, Ramos said. He wished.



*“I’m not beached. I just don’t swim on Saturdays.”*

But he had burned his bridges at the Vatican with a brutal 2013 interview of a powerful Mexican cardinal. “I was asking him about how the Church protected monsters like Marcial Maciel for so many years and we argued on-air.” Maciel was a Mexican priest who, among other depredations, sexually abused schoolboys in Italy and Spain, and was personally close to Pope John Paul II. I watched the interview, and the persistence of Ramos and the utter, teeth-gnashing rage of the cardinal were riveting. “I wasn’t able to confront those priests in school,” Ramos said. “But I can do it now.” He had definitely made himself a pariah at the Vatican, though, for years to come.

The lead story on that evening’s newscast was the resignation of Guatemala’s President, Otto Pérez Molina. Univision had a team on the ground, and they gave the event full, in-depth treatment. No other U.S. network would come close to the quality of this coverage. I watched Ramos and Salinas trade parts, sitting for some segments, standing in front of a wall lit with graphics for others. When they weren’t on the air, they clattered away on laptops, or studied monitors set beneath their desks, which showed what the competition was doing. There were moments of byplay between them. But off-camera, in repose, they were very different. Salinas, with her strong features and dramatic dark eyes, is leonine. She looks as if she could take down a wildebeest with a single bite. Ramos, beside her, seems almost meek, recessive. He folds his arms, cocks his head, and looks offstage, lost in thought, his motor barely idling. Then comes a director’s countdown, and he drops his arms, clasps his hands in front of him, leans forward, and seems to grow, addressing the camera, still relaxed but at the same time intense and commanding.

Another story for tonight: Donald Trump has just scolded Jeb Bush for speaking Spanish—to wit, “I like Jeb. He’s a nice man. But he should really set the example by speaking English while in the United States.” Salinas will report this item straight, near the end of the show, and Univision researchers have thrown together, on very short notice, a remarkable segment of Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter, George W. Bush,



*“I did not ram Preston Sturges down their throats.”*

Barack Obama, John Kerry, Hillary Clinton, Al Gore, and Marco Rubio all speaking Spanish, some more fluently than others. Bill Clinton says, in English, “I hope I’ll be the last non-Spanish-speaking President.”

The Trump news cycle will not be over soon. He has encouraged the worst instincts in white America to emerge and flail and flex. In Alabama, one of his supporters told the *Times* that he hoped President Trump would “make the border a vacation spot. It’s going to cost you twenty-five dollars for a permit, and then you get fifty dollars for every confirmed kill.” When did it become acceptable in America to talk about other human beings that way at a mainstream political rally? The silver lining of this nightmare is that Latinos are now more likely to organize, politically, in fear and anger, and to make their power felt more strongly at the polls in 2016.

Toward the end of that evening’s newscast, I left the set and crossed the

newsroom to a control room. I like the buzz of the dark, busy cockpit, all the producers and technicians intent on screens and consoles, the countdowns, the collective waves of emotion—nervousness and relief—as switches are thrown, segments successfully delivered, commercials correctly inserted. At Univision, the three official languages—Spanish, English, and Spanglish—fly around in quick, gaudy combinations. When a correspondent starts tripping over her words, a hush descends, and, when she finally makes it out of the sentence, there’s a general sigh. “Yeah, what she said.” But tonight, before I get to the door, I catch a segment up on a wall screen about that day’s ugliness. The story seems to be from North Carolina. There are posters, painted by children. The posters say “Go Home” and “America Is for Americans” and “If We Don’t Take Out the Trash, Who Will?” Nobody in the newsroom seems to be reacting to the story. Everybody has work to do. But I find myself too ashamed to open the control-room door. ♦

# A DAUGHTER'S DEATH

*The father of a star high-school athlete confronts New York City's patterns of violence.*

BY JENNIFER GONNERMAN

**O**n the evening of September 10, 2011, Taylorn Murphy took the subway to West Harlem to visit his eighteen-year-old daughter. He found her sitting on a bench, joking with her friends, in front of the building where she lived with her mother. "I need to talk to you," he said, as he walked past her into the lobby. "When you get a chance, come upstairs." It was a Saturday, two days after the start of her senior year, and she would likely stay out late, but he didn't mind waiting. He had news that he knew she'd want to hear: a basketball scout from the University of Tennessee was coming to watch her play.

His daughter's name was Tayshana—she had been named for him—but everybody knew her by her nickname, Chicken. She had hazel eyes, a contagious grin, a powerful build, and, on the inside of her right forearm, a tattoo of a basketball, with the words "It's not a game, it's my life." She had missed the prior season, after tearing her A.C.L. and undergoing knee surgery. But she had begun playing again, and ESPN's HoopGurlz had just named her the sixteenth-best female point guard in the nation. Now she was hoping to win a basketball scholarship and become the first member of her family to get a college degree.

Chicken lived with her mother, her two brothers, her sister, and her sister's baby, in a fifteenth-floor apartment at 3170 Broadway, just below 125th Street, near where the subway emerges onto an overhead track. The building is part of a large public-housing project called the General Ulysses S. Grant Houses, situated a few blocks north of Columbia University. Murphy was separated from Chicken's mother, Tephanie Holston, but he came by often to visit. That evening, he went into Chicken's room and sat on her bed, surrounded by her basketball trophies. He took a couple of painkillers, to ease an ache in

his neck and his back incurred in a recent car accident, and then, without intending to, he fell asleep.

Shortly after four o'clock the next morning, he awoke suddenly to hear his sixteen-year-old son, Taylorn, Jr., shouting, "They just shot Chicken!" Outside the apartment, Murphy heard screams coming from the stairwell. He ran down eleven flights, and found Chicken lying in a pool of blood in the hallway. Her sister, Tanasia, was hugging her and wailing, "Wake up! Wake up!" Somebody was shouting into a cell phone, pleading with a 911 operator to send help quickly. But, to Murphy, it looked as if his daughter was already dead.

She had, in fact, died almost immediately, after being shot three times, in the wrist, the hip, and the chest. A few hours later, a worker from the city medical examiner's office placed Chicken's body into a canvas bag and wheeled her out of the building on a gurney. Her mother walked alongside, one hand clutching the gurney's metal frame. Murphy followed several steps behind, his eyes fixed on the ground.

**I**n the days after the shooting, Murphy stayed at the apartment, answering calls from friends, relatives, coaches, school officials, and reporters. Weeping teen-agers came by at all hours, and Murphy did his best to comfort them. More than a hundred surveillance cameras monitor the Grant Houses, and soon the police had identified two suspects. One of them, Robert Cartagena, age twenty, had grown up in a housing project called the Manhattanville Houses, a block away, on the other side of 125th Street; the second suspect, Tyshawn Brockington, twenty-one, lived nearby. TV news shows broadcast their photographs, but nobody seemed to know where they were.

A wake was held at 6 P.M. on September 16th, at a funeral home in Queens,



Tayshana Murphy, whom everyone knew by her



*nickname, Chicken, hoped to win a basketball scholarship and become the first member of her family to get a college degree.*

not far from the Queensbridge Houses, the project where Chicken had lived between the ages of three and fourteen. Murphy expected a few hundred mourners, but Chicken had been known throughout the city, and some three thousand people came. Teen-agers crowded along the sidewalk, chanting her name, and some wore laminated pictures of Chicken on chains around their necks. Murphy saw people he didn't even recognize try to cut the line, claiming, "That's my cousin!" The wake was supposed to end at nine, but it went on until almost midnight.

The burial was the next day, in New Jersey, and afterward the family attended a vigil that a friend organized in Queensbridge. Several hundred young people, holding white candles, stood around the perimeter of the basketball court where Chicken had played nearly every day of her childhood. Murphy had grown up playing basketball, too. Now forty-two, he approached a lectern on the side of the court with the weary gait of an aging athlete. He has a thin mustache that runs to the base of his chin, and large eyes behind square-frame glasses. He was still wearing his funeral clothes: black jacket, black tie, and black fedora.

"I don't even know how I got through the last week," he said. "I was supposed

to be starting to take Tayshana to visit different schools.... I mean, it was crazy, because she was, like, 'Pop, we're finally on the same page!' I said, 'Yeah, we finally are on the same page.' We were so much alike, we just bumped heads for years. And that's only because I wanted the best for her." Murphy paused, then added, "I didn't want my kids to go through the things that I went through." He didn't elaborate, but people knew that he was referring to run-ins with the police and time in jail. Looking out at the crowd of teen-agers, he added, "I know you might be upset. I know there might be some pent-up anger. But please don't go out and do anything in the name of Chicken."

**E**ver since his daughter's murder, friends and acquaintances had been asking Murphy, "What do you want to do?" They were asking him how he wanted to avenge her death, and he had thought about it; when he saw a police officer handing out wanted posters, Murphy told him, "You better find these guys before we do." Then he got a call from a childhood friend, who lived in Columbia, South Carolina. The friend knew that criminals wanted in New York often fled to the South, and he had asked Murphy to send him photos

of the suspects. Murphy e-mailed a link to a news story, and his friend shared it with people he knew. A few days after Chicken's funeral, the friend called again, to say that someone had seen the suspects. Murphy was stunned. He wondered if it could be true and, if so, what he should do about it. Later, he told me, "I fought with myself through that whole night: 'Am I going to do this? Am I going to go down there?'"

The next morning, before he could decide, a detective called: the suspects had been found, in Columbia. They were extradited to New York, and arraigned in a courthouse downtown. From their photographs, Murphy had assumed that they were "real killers and gangsters." But, when he saw them, he says, "These guys were babies. Small in stature. Baby faces." He asked himself, What am I going to do with these little guys?

Murphy had never thought much about how to stop the disproportionately high rates of violence in certain parts of the city, but now he could think of almost nothing else. Last year, there were three hundred and thirty-three homicides in New York City, the lowest number of any year on record. But almost twenty per cent of the shootings in the city occur in public-housing developments, which hold less than five per cent of the population. Violent crime is so concentrated in some projects—places like the Ingersoll Houses, in Brooklyn, and the Castle Hill Houses, in the Bronx—that to residents it can feel as if shootings and sidewalk memorials were part of everyday life.

One of the visitors to the apartment after Chicken's death was Ha-kiem Yahmadi, a fifty-nine-year-old man from the Bronx, who was dressed in a custom-made linen leisure suit and gator shoes. Ten years earlier, he had been at his job, as a night manager at a D'Agostino's supermarket, when his sister called to tell him that his thirty-year-old son, James, had been shot and killed. Yahmadi quit his job shortly afterward, and now spent much of his time trying to console other parents who have lost children, speaking about the perils of violence at schools, and working with stop-the-violence organizations. (Until recently, he served as the program manager of an anti-violence group



called Save Our Streets South Bronx.)

That day, he had come to the apartment with about fifteen African-American and Latino men, many of them community activists who had formed a coalition called the Circle of Brothers. Murphy didn't know any of the men, but he was grateful for their visit. As Yahmadi recalls, "He said, 'When this is over, I'll be with you. Drop me off in Vietnam. Anywhere I need to be, put me there.'" The men understood what Murphy was saying—at times, their communities did feel like a war zone—but his words surprised them. Most parents whose son or daughter has just been killed "aren't thinking of anything like that," Yahmadi says. "They're just thinking about burying their child."

Murphy began speaking often with Yahmadi and soon started following his example. Six weeks after Chicken's murder, he attended a vigil in Brooklyn for Zurana Horton, a mother of thirteen, who had been killed by stray gunfire after picking up her eleven-year-old daughter from school. In February of 2012, a police officer chased Ramarley Graham, who was eighteen, into his family's Bronx home, mistakenly believing that he had a gun, and shot and killed him. Murphy visited the house and befriended Graham's parents. Four months later, a four-year-old boy, Lloyd Morgan, Jr., was killed by crossfire on a playground at the Forest Houses, in the Bronx. Murphy went to a press conference there the next day and found Shianne Norman, the child's mother. "Hey, Sis. I know what you're going through," he called to her. "I lost my daughter. My daughter was Chicken." Norman broke away from the reporters to speak with him, and they exchanged phone numbers. The next week, Murphy attended her son's funeral.

He frequently had trouble sleeping, and he spent hours at night making lists of the problems that he saw—"violence," "poverty," "P.T.S.D. in the community." Then he researched them on the Internet, and typed up ideas about how to fix them, including more counselling for children and teens traumatized by violence. He sketched out plans to start a foundation in Chicken's memory, which would organize an annual basketball tournament. And he spoke

on the phone with other parents of murdered children, many of whom were also unable to sleep. Some nights, Shianne Norman called, and they talked about their sadness and the unfairness of what had happened to their families.

She told him that, whenever she tried to talk to her boyfriend about their son's death, he fled the room. The police had arrested two teen-age boys for Lloyd, Jr.'s murder, and, when Norman had to go to court, Murphy went, too. One day, at the courthouse, he met Lloyd Morgan, Sr. He seemed angry and not interested in talking, but Murphy persisted, and eventually the two became friends. Norman says, "It was like a weight lifted off his back that he could actually have someone who understood him." The couple are now engaged, and Norman credits Murphy with saving the relationship.

**M**urphy was born in the Queensbridge Houses, but, when he was four, his father, a Vietnam veteran who worked as a prison guard, moved the family into Lindsay Park, a middle-income housing complex in Williamsburg. In his junior high school, Murphy was in a gifted program, as was Jay Z, whom everyone knew as Shawn Carter, and who lived nearby, in the Marcy Houses. At Lindsay Park, Murphy had an unofficial big sister, named Esaw (Pinky) Snipes. For a while, they lived in the same building, and in the summer they went to day camp together. After they both moved away, they saw each other at Lindsay Park's annual Old-Timers' Day reunions. That's where Murphy met Eric Garner, who died last year, on Staten Island, after a police officer put him in a choke hold; he was Pinky's husband.

Murphy had not been nearly as focussed on basketball as Chicken had, but he was good enough to play for August Martin High School, in South Jamaica, Queens, which had a strong team. This was in the mid-eighties, and South Jamaica was the center of the city's crack-cocaine trade. Murphy started selling marijuana in his junior

year, and soon moved on to powder cocaine and crack, carrying a beeper in his book bag. Shortly after graduation, he was arrested—as he recalls, for steering customers to a seller—but a judge gave him "youthful offender" status. (If he obeyed the rules of his probation, the crime would not appear on his record.) Around the same time, while walking through Bedford-Stuyvesant

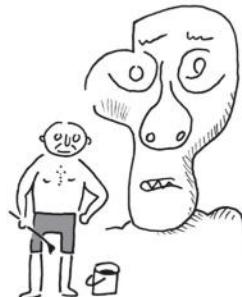
one evening, he was shot in the arm by a stranger. The shooting seemed random—and unrelated to his drug-selling—but he took it as a sign that he needed to make a change in his life.

By 1990, Murphy, then twenty, had a job in a hospital laundry in the Bronx.

One morning, running late, he hurried to catch a train and slipped through a subway gate without paying. A police officer stopped him and found a pistol in his briefcase. After he had been shot, Murphy says, he felt as if he needed a gun, though he hadn't intended to take it to work. He didn't usually carry his briefcase, but that day he had to bring papers for a meeting with his supervisor, and he had forgotten that the gun was there. He also did not know that the police had put out a warrant for his arrest. Nine months earlier, a man had been stabbed to death in a Queens park. A woman—a prostitute with a crack habit—had been with him, and when the police showed her a book of pictures she identified Murphy as the killer. (His photo was likely left over from his earlier drug arrest.)

He was charged with both weapons possession and murder and was taken to Rikers Island. Six months later, he was still there, awaiting trial, when he met Tephanie Holston, the friend of another inmate's girlfriend, in the visiting room. She was nineteen then, and, Murphy recalls, she was "gorgeous inside and out." She lived in a housing project in Brooklyn with her two young children and her grandmother. Murphy assured her that he had not killed anyone, and he managed to make her laugh, which impressed her, given the gravity of his situation. She began visiting him three times a week.

In early 1991, Murphy was tried for murder. The trial ended in a hung jury;



jurors voted 8-4 to acquit. The prosecutor put him on trial again, and the second jury did not convict him, either. A new lawyer, Steven Silberblatt, took over his defense, and filed a motion to dismiss the charges, but the prosecutor persuaded the judge that Murphy should be tried for a third time. Meanwhile, on Rikers, Murphy ran into an inmate he knew, Derrick Hamilton, who was also charged with a homicide that he said he had not committed. He told Murphy, "If you know you're innocent, then you have nothing to worry about."

Silberblatt, who worked for the Legal Aid Society, believed that Murphy was not guilty and that his first two trials had been "a farce." He shared his doubts with the prosecutor, and worked out a deal in which Murphy would plead guilty to second-degree manslaughter. Murphy still maintained his innocence, but he agreed to the deal because, he said, it involved a rarely used agreement known as an Alford plea. (Typically, a defendant who pleads guilty has to say in court that he committed the crime, but with an Alford plea a defendant doesn't have to admit to any wrongdoing.) By agreeing to the plea deal, Murphy wouldn't have to risk a third trial, and he would soon be able to go home.

A judge sentenced him to one to three years and, with time served, he was released in April, 1992. On May 4, 1993, Chicken was born. If not for those two hung juries, Murphy, instead of having a daughter, might have spent decades in a penitentiary upstate. That's what happened to his friend Derrick Hamilton; he was convicted and spent twenty years in prison. Last January, four years after Hamilton was released, a conviction-review unit in the Brooklyn district attorney's office re-investigated his case, concluded that he was not guilty, and asked a judge to throw out his conviction.

**W**hen Murphy was a child, everybody called him Yummy, because he loved to eat. His favorite food was chicken, and when Tayshana was a baby he called her Chicken Wings, later shortened to Chicken. She first picked up a basketball at age three, and by six she could dribble a ball between her legs. She learned how to

play by watching Murphy's pickup games, and when she was nine she joined a boys' travelling team called Triple Threat. She suffered from chronic asthma, and sometimes had to go to the hospital after a game, but she never wanted to stop playing. When she returned to Queensbridge after her fifth-grade graduation ceremony, she ran straight onto the basketball court, without stopping to change out of her dress.

Murphy had five children: a daughter, Deana, born when he was in high school, with whom he stayed in contact; Tephanie's son and daughter, Robert and Tanasia, whom he considered his own; Chicken; and Taylornn, Jr. Chicken reminded him most of the teen-ager he had been. They both played point guard, and they had the same personality: headstrong, charismatic, and funny. Chicken liked to tell people that when she grew up she was not going to play in the W.N.B.A.: "I'm going to the N.B.A." Murphy considered it his job to, as he put it, "keep her head able to fit through the door." It wasn't easy. The *Daily News* covered her high-school career with the sort of attention paid to professional athletes. When she was a freshman at Bishop Loughlin Memorial High School, a Catholic school in Brooklyn, the *News* put her photo on the cover of a sports insert, noting that she averaged twenty-six points a game—"Simply put: Get her on the court and she's trouble."

By then, Chicken had moved to the Grant Houses with her mother and her siblings. Murphy couldn't afford his own place, so he usually stayed with his mother or his brother, both of whom still lived in Lindsay Park. When Murphy had been on Rikers Island, the prosecutor's plea deal had seemed like a get-out-of-jail-free card. But, in the fifteen years since, he had come to view it as a mistake; with a manslaughter conviction on his record, he had found it nearly impossible to get a decent-paying job. When he tried to explain to prospective employers that he was innocent, he could tell that they didn't believe him.

Ron Artest, who then played for the Los Angeles Lakers, had grown up in Queensbridge. He funded Triple Threat, the travelling team Chicken had played for, and he paid her tuition when she entered high school. But Murphy still

had to pay for her sneakers, school uniforms, and supplies, and the expenses for the travelling teams she played on. He took whatever jobs he could get: setting up for fashion shows on the West Side piers; promoting concerts at the Paradise Theatre, in the Bronx; driving a truck for a moving company. When he wasn't working, he accompanied Chicken to practice, yelled advice from the sidelines at games, and drove her to out-of-state tournaments, sometimes as far away as Atlanta.

Chicken transferred to another Catholic school, and then, after her sophomore year, enrolled at Murry Bergtraum, a public high school in lower Manhattan, which had one of the top girls' basketball programs in the country. But she tore her A.C.L. before the season started, while playing in a tournament. After her surgery, Murphy sensed that some of the college scouts who had shown interest in her earlier were skeptical that she would still be as explosive on the court. Her first full game was at the Nike Rose Classic, a prestigious girls' tournament in Brooklyn, in the spring of 2011. She was supposed to wait another week, to get a sleeve fitted for her knee, but she persuaded the coach to let her play, and scored nearly thirty points.

**F**orty-five hundred people live in the nine brick towers that make up the Grant Houses. The Manhattanville Houses, with six buildings, are home to three thousand people. According to the New York City Housing Authority, the average household income for both projects is twenty-four thousand dollars a year, and nearly forty per cent of the residents between the ages of eighteen and sixty-one are unemployed. The projects are more than fifty years old and in severe disrepair. In the apartment where Chicken lived, the bathroom sink had fallen off the wall, and another wall had crumbled, leaving a gaping hole; the elevators often broke down.

Most of the city's three hundred and twenty-eight housing projects are in poor condition, but, in 2013, Bill de Blasio, then the city's public advocate, issued a report showing that the Grant Houses had more "outstanding work-order requests" than any other project in the city. Conditions such as lobby doors with broken locks and stairwells

without lights exacerbate an already serious crime problem. In 2014, the *News* reported that “some of the city’s most crime-ridden housing projects are the same developments most in need of immediate repairs.”

For decades, the Grant and Manhattanville Houses had been embroiled in a feud. As in other projects, some young people joined “crews.” The Grant crew called itself 3 Staccs; Manhattanville’s was the Make It Happen Boys. The crews were not affiliated with es-

school when it wasn’t guaranteed that they would live to see twenty-one. Murphy began referring to himself as a “one-man bereavement team.” He told the young people that he loved them and to stay in school, because Chicken would have wanted them to.

Murphy worried especially about his son Taylornn, Jr., whom everyone called Bam Bam. He had been very close to his sister, whom he strongly resembled. An aunt recalls, “Where you saw one, you saw the other. He looked up to her.”

Chicken’s grave was too far away to visit often, so when Murphy wanted to feel close to her he would sit for a while in her bedroom. Or, in a ritual he called “walking my daughter’s last steps,” he would climb the building stairwell from the lobby to the fourth floor, picking his way over cigarette butts and trying to ignore the smell of urine, to the spot where Chicken had died, and light a candle. Around the first anniversary of her death, he began seeing a therapist, at a clinic on the Lower East Side.



Taylornn Murphy stands at the spot where his daughter was killed, in a hallway of the Grant Houses, in West Harlem.

tablished gangs, like the Bloods or the Crips, and their disputes were not about drugs or money. Rather, they fought over turf and status. Often, the conflicts seemed to be fuelled by little more than boredom.

After Chicken’s death, every time Murphy visited the Grant Houses he was besieged by grieving teen-agers, who called him Pops, slapped palms with him and hugged him, sometimes resting their heads on his shoulder. Some of Chicken’s friends were angry; many appeared depressed. They asked him why they should bother trying to finish

After Chicken’s death, a rumor spread that he was caught up in the Grant-Manhattanville feud, and that the killers had actually been looking for him. This mistaken-identity theory was not substantiated, and it did not hold up at trial. Still, Hakiem Yahmadi, who frequently visited Taylornn, Jr., said, “That’s a lot of pressure to put on a young guy.” Murphy says that his son became more of an introvert, and began “self-sedating”; on many days, he appeared “drunk, twisted, totally wasted.” The neighbors noticed a difference, too. One said, “When they killed her, they killed him.”

Yahmadi was impressed. Most fathers he met in their situation would never consider therapy. “In our community, men don’t get help,” he says. “We’ll turn around and either drug it up or drink it up.”

In early 2011, Murphy had applied for a job as a subway conductor with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. (He had recently obtained from the state a “certificate of good conduct,” a document that he hadn’t previously known existed, which is intended to remove the stigma that ex-prisoners encounter in looking for work.) But now

he asked to have his application put on hold; he didn't feel ready to take on a full-time job. As his therapist explained in a letter to the M.T.A., "Taylorn A. Murphy is a 43 yrs old African-American male struggling with the sudden and tragic loss of his 18 yrs old daughter on September 11, 2011. Her sudden death and the circumstances of her death impaired Mr. Murphy socially and occupationally. Mr. Murphy has been suffering from insomnia, and as a result exhibits the following symptoms: fatigue, irritability, excessive daytime sleepiness, and a mild relapse of anxiety and depressive symptoms."

In the spring of 2013, Tyshawn Brockington became the first of the two murder suspects to go on trial. He had a prior arrest for assault, and, according to prosecutors, he belonged to the Manhattanville crew. Murphy and Tephanie Holston attended every day of the trial. Hakiem Yahmadi, Shianne Norman, and the parents of Ramarley Graham went when they could.

For the first time, Chicken's parents heard the full story of their daughter's murder. That day, dozens of young people from Grant and Manhattanville had been fighting. Brockington was assaulted, and that night a large group from Grant attacked Robert Cartagena on 125th Street. Chicken was on the street and watched the fight, then returned to 3170 Broadway and hung out in front of the building with friends, listening to a boom box and dancing. A few hours later, Brockington and Cartagena went to the Grant Houses looking for revenge. When they saw a crowd in front of 3170, they chased six teen-agers—Chicken, her brother, and four other boys—inside. The day before, Chicken had suffered an asthma attack; now she slowed down, and Brockington and Cartagena caught her in the hallway. It wasn't clear who fired the weapon, but witnesses testified that, before Chicken was shot, she pleaded for her life. The jurors convicted Brockington of murder, and Judge Thomas Farber sentenced him to twenty-five years to life.

Cartagena's lawyer repeatedly failed to appear in court, and his trial didn't begin until a year later. Cartagena had a history of domestic violence, and prosecutors alleged that he, too, was a mem-

ber of the Manhattanville crew. The jury found him guilty of murder. Judge Farber, who presided at this trial as well, called the crime "a cold-blooded execution," and gave Cartagena the same sentence as Brockington's. Then Farber spoke about the Grant-Manhattanville feud. He pointed out that the young men from the two projects had much in common: "They were the same young men. They live in the same geographical area." The differences between them, he said, "don't exist except in the minds of the people who are fighting. So they are fighting over nothing, really nothing." But the feud had given them a "feeling of purpose," and "unless we are able to impart meaning into our children's lives, then this drama is going to keep playing again and again and again, and people are still going to die."

Tyshawn Brockington's mother, Arnita, had first learned that he was wanted for murder when another son called and told her to turn on the news. She was then fifty-five, and since 1983 she had lived across the street from the Manhattanville Houses, where she had raised five boys on her own—Tyshawn was the fourth—with money she made as a babysitter, an Avon representative, and working for the Parks Department. After Tyshawn's arrest, she mostly stopped going out. When she did leave her building, she could feel everyone looking at her. "Hi, Arnita!" someone would shout, then say, loud enough for her to hear, "That's the mother of the boy who killed Chicken."

She didn't attend every day of the trial. "I couldn't take it," she says. "It made me mentally and physically sick." She saw Chicken's parents in the courtroom and wanted to speak to them, but she didn't know what to say, or whether they would even want to hear from her. After the trial, Derrick Haynes, a Harlem community activist and high-school basketball coach, asked her if she would like to meet Murphy.

Haynes had closely followed Tyshawn's trial; he himself had grown up in the Manhattanville Houses, and, a month before the shooting, he had coached Tyshawn in a basketball tournament. No one is certain how the trouble between Manhattanville and Grant began, but

Haynes says that it dates back to at least 1972, when he was eight, and his fifteen-year-old brother, Eli, was shot while trying to break up a school-yard fight. Eli, who died the next day, told the police that he had been shot by a boy from the Grant Houses.

Haynes introduced himself to Murphy and asked if he would meet with Brockington. Murphy agreed. He had seen how she sat slumped on a bench during the trial, sometimes leaving the courtroom and returning with reddened eyes. He did not blame her for what her son had done. "I came from a family with a mother and a father, and they had problems with me. And I think of five of me and just my mother?" he said. "I understand her plight."

Members of Chicken's family were shocked when they learned that he and Tyshawn's mother had met and were beginning to form a friendship. Murphy had not consulted with them, and Holston was furious, especially since the trial had only just ended. She said, "There was so much rage." But Hakiem Yahmadi says, "He's looking at the bigger picture. How do you heal a community if everybody is going to walk around with bitterness and revenge and want to retaliate? This ain't never going to stop."

Since Chicken's death, the violence in Grant and Manhattanville had grown worse. A sixteen-year-old was shot in the shoulder, a twenty-one-year-old was shot in the leg, and at least three bystanders were hit. Taylorn, Jr., was still living in the Grant Houses with his mother, and during this time he acquired a rap sheet. At the end of 2012, he was arrested for burglary, after a dispute involving a cell phone; he was charged as a "youthful offender" and put on probation. The next summer, he was arrested again, accused, with four others, of punching a Manhattanville resident and robbing him of a hundred dollars.

At the same time, the neighborhood was rapidly gentrifying. Double-decker tour buses frequently drove by the projects, and passengers took pictures of the residents. "It's like they've never seen people before," Arnita Brockington said. Meanwhile, a sleek, nine-story glass block, designed by Renzo Piano, was rising right across Broadway. It will house Columbia

University's new science center, the first of sixteen buildings to be erected as part of a six-billion-dollar addition to the main campus.

One afternoon, Haynes and Murphy walked over to Community Board 9, which advises West Harlem residents on city services available to them, to get information about its youth committee. The C.B. 9 office is on Old Broadway, a block-long street that runs north from 125th Street, just east of Broadway. The street connects the Grant and Manhattanville Houses, and almost every day after school it became a battle zone, with kids throwing bottles at one another and sometimes fighting. That afternoon, as trouble began, Haynes went to talk to the kids from Manhattanville; Murphy headed toward the Grant kids. After a few stern words from each, the fighting stopped. The Reverend Georgiette Morgan-Thomas, the chair of C.B. 9, has worked on anti-violence initiatives in Harlem for fifteen years. She watched the two men, then told them, "We need you on this block."

Two doors down from the office was a shuttered storefront, with a faded sign that read "Flerida Beauty Salon." Murphy and Haynes discussed trying to take over the space and convert it into a crisis center. In the meantime, they began walking through the projects with Arnitia Brockington. In the Grant Houses, people asked Murphy, "Why is *she* here?" "What are you doing with *her*?" But, eventually, residents got used to seeing the three of them together. Stories had begun circulating that the police were planning a major crackdown, and they warned the teen-agers to stay out of trouble.

Murphy and Haynes never called the kids they met "disconnected youth," but that is how academics and policy-makers would describe many of them. (The term refers to young people who are neither in school nor working; the group comprises about twenty per cent of New York City residents between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four.) To try to help these young people, Murphy and Haynes organized a jobs seminar with a representative from the community-affairs office of Columbia



Kanim

*"Here's what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna write a number on this piece of paper, and I'm gonna slide the paper over to you real slowly. You're gonna unfold the paper, read it, and then I'm gonna see if I can remember the number."*

University; attempted to broker a truce between the projects; and spoke to everyone they could find who might be able to help them open a crisis center, including the city councilman Mark Levine, who endorsed the idea. "We desperately need a safe, positive space for young people in both developments to get to know one another and tear down this wall of animosity," Levine said. "We don't have any sustained program for that."

They also talked to Daryl Khan, a reporter for a nonprofit news site called the Juvenile Justice Information Exchange, who wrote extensively about their efforts. As Murphy later put it, "People want to blame the children, but they're the product of all this madness. Adults—we should have had these things worked out for them a long time ago."

When Murphy wasn't in West Harlem, he continued to attend vigils and funerals, console grieving parents and teens, and occasionally visit schools in the Bronx with Yahmadi. Lee Clayton Jones, a childhood friend of Murphy's who teaches political science in Atlanta, told me that he understood why Murphy never seemed to stop work-

ing. "If his daughter is able to be murdered like that and nothing structurally changes in black communities, then that's a type of waste that cannot be rationalized, that's a complete waste," he says. "In order for her life to have meaning, something positive must come from it."

In January of 2013, Murphy heard that a sixteen-year-old boy named Raphael (Sadonte) Ward had been shot and killed on the Lower East Side, and the next day he and Yahmadi went to the family's home, in the Baruch Houses. They spoke with the boy's mother, father, and stepfather. The mother, Arlene Delgado, says, "Just the fact that Taylorn and Hakiem had lost their children—I already knew that they understood exactly what I was going through."

Murphy stayed in contact with Delgado, sending a text message every week. She says, "There were days I woke up—I was still hurt, but I was O.K. And then there were days that I woke, and I said, I want to kill the motherf\*\*kers that did this to my son." Then she would call Murphy and tell him, "I'm having one of those angry moments." One day, he replied, "You think I don't wake up angry? They killed my baby!" But then he quickly calmed

down and told her, "You're going to be all right. Don't let the Devil rent no space in your head. That's what he wants."

**E**arly on the morning of June 4, 2014, the thrum of helicopter rotors could be heard throughout West Harlem. Police Commissioner William Bratton tweeted a picture of himself standing on a street corner, surrounded by officers, with the caption "With members of the #NYPD Gang Division & Chief of Patrol this AM in West Harlem." With Bratton watching, some five hundred officers had raided the Grant and Manhattanville Houses. Arnita Brockington woke to the sound of someone banging on her door. The police burst in, she said, before she could finish dressing. They were looking for her seventeen-year-old son, Naquan, whom they handcuffed and took away.

The Manhattan district attorney, Cyrus R. Vance, Jr., had secured the indictments of a hundred and three young men, all of whom were allegedly members of three neighborhood crews: 3 Stacs, the Make It Happen Boys, and Money Avenue, which was based a few blocks east, on Manhattan Avenue. A press release from Vance's office described this as the "largest indicted gang case in NYC history." The youngest defendant was fifteen, the oldest was thirty; the average age was twenty.

Four years earlier, shortly after Vance took office, he had created the Crime Strategies Unit, and prosecutors had zeroed in on West Harlem as a "violent crime hot spot." Now they alleged that, since the start of 2010, the three crews had been responsible for two murders, at least nineteen nonfatal shootings, and about fifty other incidents in which shots were fired but nobody was hit. One of the murder victims was Chicken. The other was Walter Sumter, an eighteen-year-old who had been shot in the chest just after midnight on December 30, 2011, as he was leaving a party. That homicide had yet to be solved. By filing a gang-conspiracy case, prosecutors hoped to put an immediate end to the crew-versus-crew violence. Or, as Vance's chief assistant explained, "We like to take it out at the root so it doesn't come back." The D.A.'s office had already filed

thirteen other such cases in Manhattan.

The indictments reflected a strategy, favored by Vance's office and the N.Y.P.D., to build conspiracy cases that rely heavily on social media. For the West Harlem case, police and prosecutors had scrutinized more than a million social-media pages, and eavesdropped on thousands of inmate phone calls. The indictments were filled with posts that the defendants had allegedly written on Facebook, bragging about past crimes and threatening future ones, with claims such as "IMA KILL U" and "I WANT ONE OF THEM DEAD." Prosecutors use such posts to show relations among the defendants and to prove intent, while defense attorneys often contend that their clients were merely posturing.

Murphy learned about the raid at around 6 A.M., when he got a call from Derrick Haynes. He was devastated to discover that his son was among those indicted. At the time, Taylorn, Jr., was already in jail; four months earlier, he'd been arrested in connection with an assault. Now he and thirty-five others—all alleged members of 3 Stacs—faced a number of felony charges, including weapons possession, assault, attempted murder, and conspiracy.

Later that day, Vance held a press conference at N.Y.P.D. headquarters, at One Police Plaza. He mentioned Chicken as "one of the victims in this senseless gang escalating war," and added, "You need to look no further than the Murphy and Brockington families in this case to see the tragedy of how parents are losing their children—multiple children—potentially to prison, and perhaps to an early grave." He described the residents' fear, and said, "The takedown we believe will immediately improve public safety in the areas where the gangs operated."

Haynes and Murphy agreed that something needed to be done about the violence, but they did not think that this was the right solution. Many of the young men they had been trying to mentor were now headed to Rikers Island. That afternoon, Daryl Khan, the reporter, found the two men on Old Broadway. They appeared "visibly crest-fallen and weary," he wrote. Murphy summed up their frustration by saying, "We asked the city for help, and we got



Last May, in Queensbridge Park, overlooking

a raid." Later, he added, "The money spent on this indictment, the money spent on this military-style raid, the money spent on housing these young individuals, the money spent on this prosecution—if you took two per cent or ten per cent of that money, we might be able to have enough money to deal with this whole youth problem."

Some criminal-law experts were also critical. K. Babe Howell, a professor at the City University of New York law school, sees a connection between the low crime rate and the large-scale indictment. With the decline in crime, she said, prosecutors in the D.A.'s office have



the East River, friends and relatives released lanterns at a picnic to mark what would have been Chicken's twenty-second birthday.

less to do, and “that leaves a lot of brain-power to think and be creative. But it’s one of those situations: when you’re a hammer, everything looks like a nail. When you’re a prosecutor,” the question becomes, “How do we prosecute these crews? Instead of, How do we intervene early and think about diversion?” In Howell’s view, the city would have done better to revive an approach that emphasized conflict resolution and mediation. She said, “New York City had a policy of using street workers in the nineteen-fifties and sixties.” The street workers were local people hired by the city to deter gang members from violence

and help them find jobs—essentially what Haynes and Murphy had been trying to do. This tactic was, she believed, more effective than the city’s current strategy of “an intense law-enforcement-based suppression of street gangs,” which she called “a shortsighted approach.”

After the raid, the projects grew quieter, and the number of shootings dropped. Some residents told reporters that they were relieved and were no longer afraid to leave their apartments. Others were outraged by how the raid had been conducted and by the years of surveillance that had preceded it. Twice in

the fall, family members of the defendants gathered outside the criminal courthouse, at 100 Centre Street, to protest the arrests. They were joined by a few dozen students from Columbia University, waving signs with slogans such as “Jobs Not Raids” and “Mass Incarceration Is a Racist Tool.” A mother from the Grant Houses told a reporter from the *Columbia Spectator*, “The police sat on this for four years. They didn’t step in. There was no mediation because they wanted us to just go away.”

The day after the raid, the university’s vice-president for public safety had sent a campus-wide e-mail declaring



*"Oh. Wow. Another sonnet."*

•      •

that the “indictments make our city and community safer. . . . Following these arrests, we are actively supporting an enhanced police presence in West Harlem.” The message angered some students, who interpreted it to mean that the university fully endorsed the police action. A Columbia spokesperson disputed this in an e-mail: “We do not comment about the tactics of the N.Y.P.D. The June 5th message focussed on information about measures taken to promote the safety of our community, and students who maintain otherwise are mistaken.”

Meanwhile, the topic of police-community relations had become front-page news, following the deaths of Michael Brown, in Ferguson, Missouri, and Eric Garner. Students at Columbia began inviting Murphy to speak on campus. George Joseph, now a senior, who has written articles for *The Nation* and *The Intercept*, says, “Everyone learns a lot from talking to Taylornn. He always has really positive energy, he’s always looking forward.” Murphy became friends with some students, and he invited them to meet residents of the Grant Houses, to join a picnic to mark Chicken’s twenty-second birthday, and to attend Ramarley Graham’s third-annual

memorial service, in the Bronx. At large rallies against police brutality, Murphy marched alongside Columbia students, and introduced some to his childhood friend Esaw Snipes Garner.

Compared with some of the protesters, Murphy had a more nuanced view of the police. If not for the efforts of law enforcement, his daughter’s killers would still be at large. (He referred to the period after she had been murdered and before her killers were caught as “the longest ten days of my life.”) Besides that, his whole life had afforded him a unique understanding of the criminal-justice system. He was the son of a prison guard, but he also knew how it felt to be a prisoner. He had made money selling drugs, but had also been tried twice for a murder he had not committed. He had learned how it felt to sit in the spectator section of a courtroom and watch the killers of his child go on trial, and now he was sitting on a courtroom bench again, and finding out how it felt to be the father of a defendant.

In January, nearly eight months after the raid, Manhattan prosecutors filed a new criminal case, charging four young men—all alleged members of 3 Staccs—with the murder of Walter Sumter. One

of the accused was Taylornn, Jr. In court papers, prosecutors laid out their theory: Sumter had been a member of the Money Avenue crew, and had been “widely hated by the 3 Staccs gang.” He had allegedly obtained the 9-mm. handgun that had been used to kill Chicken, and crew members used it to shoot at 3 Staccs members.

Prosecutors persuaded the judge to join the murder case with the gang-conspiracy case, arguing that the alleged crimes were related. This is not an unusual practice; combining major felony charges with conspiracy charges can make convictions easier to obtain. And if, as sometimes occurs, a jury acquits a defendant of murder but convicts him of conspiracy, it is still a victory for the prosecution. According to Taylornn, Jr.’s attorney, Patrick J. Brackley, the murder case is “very flawed.” He said, “There is no forensics, no fingerprints. There is no weapon that is connected to Taylornn, Jr.” At trial, the prosecutors’ case will likely rely on social-media posts and on testimony from other defendants in the hundred-and-three-person indictment, who are now coöperating with law enforcement.

On the day that Taylornn, Jr., was charged with murder, Murphy was the only spectator in the courtroom. He sat on a bench near the front, his head bowed to one side, his lips pressed tightly together. His son had been sixteen when Walter Sumter was killed. Now nineteen, Taylornn, Jr., faced the possibility of spending decades in prison. Officers escorted him into the courtroom, wearing gray sweatpants and a gray shirt, his wrists cuffed behind his back. He stood before the judge for a few minutes, then was ushered out, nodding to his father as he left. Afterward, Murphy said little except that Taylornn, Jr., had insisted that he was innocent. He added, “I love my son dearly.”

The following week, a twenty-four-year-old woman sent Murphy a message on Facebook:

Hi Mr Murphy I know we don’t know each other but I used to play ball with your daughter my name is Rayah Feb 1 2015 I lost my young cousin Christopher Graham. It made the news. If you’re free Monday at 9 am his funeral is at Unity. I would really appreciate your uplifting wise words.

Graham, who was twenty-two, had been shot in the head after performing at a

rap show in the Bronx. Rayah thought that Graham's friends would need to hear "real stuff" at his funeral, and she remembered Murphy, whom she had heard speak three years earlier, at the funeral of a friend.

Taylornn, Jr.'s latest legal troubles had not deterred Murphy from continuing his work. On the morning of Graham's funeral, he attended another court date for his son, then took the subway to the Unity Funeral Chapel, in Harlem. By the time he arrived, the crowd was spilling out the door, and the pastor was finishing up. Some of Graham's friends had laminated his photograph and wore it on chains around their necks.

On the sidewalk, Murphy spoke to a few people, then spotted fifteen young men standing off to the side, tattoos covering their arms, pants riding extra-low. He walked over to them and said, "I understand what's going on here. This is just a real messed-up situation." The men may or may not have known who Murphy was, but they seemed to be listening. "I understand your pain right now," he said. "Because every time I see something like this, I go through the same pain." He delivered his usual message: Do not shoot someone to retaliate for your friend's death. Or, as he put it that day, "Sometimes, we take ourselves and put ourselves in a worse position from a bad position."

He spoke briefly, then ended as he always did: "I love you all." A few feet away, a young man popped the cork on a bottle of pink Moët & Chandon, sprinkled some on the ground in Graham's honor, and then passed it around to his friends, who quickly finished it.

In early June, almost two years after Murphy and Derrick Haynes had started talking about opening a crisis center, they obtained a lease to a six-hundred-square-foot storefront on Old Broadway, in a building that belonged to the city. It wasn't the former beauty shop but an abandoned social club next door, where local residents had once gathered to play dominoes and cards. After it closed, tenants who lived upstairs appeared to have used it for storage; there was a refrigerator, a supermarket cart, a VCR, an iron, an eight of hearts, and unopened mail from

years back. The stench—of dust, dirt, and mildew—was suffocating. But to Murphy and Haynes the location, between the two projects, was ideal. The rent is fourteen hundred dollars a month. They had paid for two months, with a donation from an elderly woman who used to live nearby. Now they needed to raise money to renovate the space.

In the year since the raid, there had been one homicide in the projects, but, according to the N.Y.P.D., it was unrelated to the feud. Of the hundred and three defendants charged in the conspiracy case, eighty-one have pleaded guilty; three were convicted at trial; one was acquitted; and the rest are waiting for their cases to go to trial. Most of those who had been convicted were in prison, though several were out on probation or attending court-ordered programs. Arnita Brockington's son Naquan pleaded guilty to attempted gang assault, and is now in a medium-security prison upstate; he is eligible for parole in 2018. Taylornn, Jr., is still on Rikers Island awaiting his trial, which will likely start early next year.

On a humid afternoon in late June, Murphy and Haynes sat outside the storefront. Old Broadway was quiet until eight police officers appeared across the street, with two boys from Manhattanville, in handcuffs. News of what had happened spread on the block: the boys



had been leaving a store around the corner when a car drove by and a young man from Grant got out, shouting threats and claiming that he had a gun. The two boys ran. The police stopped them, but the car drove off. Now a Manhattanville resident was shouting, "These Grant kids are out of control!"

After checking that neither boy had an open warrant, the police released them, and the block grew calm again. Murphy shook his head. "Everyone else

in their right mind would say, 'You can't pay me enough to deal with this headache,'" he said. But later that afternoon he planned to walk through the Grant Houses, to find out who had been behind the dispute, and explain again why the violence had to stop. Not everyone got the message: two weeks later, a twenty-four-year-old man was shot in the Grant Houses.

Soon after the raid, the district attorney's office had started a youth-sports program in Manhattanville, but Murphy and Haynes believed that much more was needed. They hoped to offer job training, G.E.D.-prep courses, and parenting classes. Murphy had already set up a "first responder" team, made up of two mothers whose sons had been killed, to visit families who have lost a child. Arnita Brockington will work in the office, and Columbia students will volunteer time there. By the end of the summer, the men had yet to raise enough money for renovations, but they had submitted applications for grants.

Murphy hopes, someday, to be paid to do this kind of work, and to get an apartment of his own, but for now he still spends most nights with family members. Not long ago, he found himself awake at 3 A.M., staring at his cell phone. A friend in New Jersey had visited Chicken's grave and sent a photo of her tombstone, which reads:

BELOVED DAUGHTER  
TAYSHANA MURPHY  
05-04-1993 - 09-11-2011

Murphy thought back to her childhood, remembering how he used to call her Hollywood Wings and tell her "Have fun!" as she sprinted onto the court at the start of a game. Holding the phone in one hand, he typed onto his Facebook page, "Tayshana Chicken Murphy you reached for them stars, you have landed on the moon. God called you home, and I accept that. I really have no choice but to. Yet I know, Chicken Wings, we still have a journey to complete. I have heard you these three-going-on-four years, telling me I must keep going. Our dreams of changing lives have just begun." He typed a few more lines, then added, "Until we see each other again, Rest in Paradise. I Love You." ♦

# Vespa



*Tim Parks*

**M**ark parked his Vespa beside three others outside Yasmin's school, in Manchester, where it would be safe. Yasmin never bothered going to school on Fridays, so they had to meet elsewhere. The day was dull and drizzly, and Mark had got damp riding into town. He felt a little uncomfortable. His jeans were spotted with mud, but his fingers were warm in nice new gloves. He loved his Vespa. He locked his helmet under the seat and, led by a series of text messages, took the bus three stops to Elmsley Street, where Yasmin said they could make love in an empty house; there was a way in through the garden, she said. She had been there before.

But when he got to Elmsley Street it turned out that they'd have to climb the garden wall, then go in through a broken window in full view of passersby. Mark refused. What was the point of getting caught breaking into a house when they could make love at his parents' on the weekend? In comfort.

"Remember, my mother's going away," he told his girlfriend.

They sat in a coffee shop on Cote Street, but Yasmin couldn't smoke inside, and even outside on the seats under the awning she wasn't sure she dared to smoke her dope, which she could have done if they had gone to the empty house. She didn't mean to criticize, she said. Her parents had kept her home four Saturday nights in a row for skipping school, so she understood his worry about getting caught.

They held hands and fiddled with each other's rings. They were in love and had been officially engaged on Facebook for three months. Yasmin wore old woolen gloves she had scissored off at the knuckles so she could roll cigarettes without removing them. Her fingernails were brown and bitten. Mark loved to watch the fumes curling lazily from her parted lips. She was six months younger than him, but it somehow felt as if she were much older.

When the school day ended, Yasmin went to the warehouse where her father worked to get a lift home, and Mark met his mother, who had come into town to shop. They nosed into three or four places on the High Street, and eventually Mark's mother bought him a new sweater. It was a deep mauve that went well with his dark hair, but he was wor-

ried that it made him look rather bulky. Mark's mother didn't get anything for herself. She seemed distracted. When they drove back to Yasmin's school, the Vespa wasn't there.

The school railings were on Eastleigh Road, where there was slow traffic in both directions. It was such an exposed place that it was hard to imagine how anyone could have dared to steal anything. There were five other bikes and mopeds of one kind or another lined up together, but Mark's wasn't among them. The rain was falling heavily now, and they didn't have an umbrella.

"Are you sure you left it here?" Mark's mother asked sharply. Mark was perfectly sure, but his mother was not convinced. "Think," she said. "Try to remember." Mark suddenly felt very upset, staring at the five bikes in the splashing rain. Without the Vespa, it would be hard to get home when he came back from college at the weekend. And, once he did get there, he'd be a prisoner in a remote house in the country—his mother lived a fifteen-minute drive out of town. She was going away, and there would be no more lifts in her car. He would never get Yasmin home without the Vespa.

"For heaven's sake, don't cry," his mother scolded. "Think of the moment you got off the bike and locked up your helmet. Where were you?"

"I know I left it here!" Mark's voice quavered. "Where else would I leave it when I come to meet Yasmin?"

"Call her," his mother said. "Just to check."

Mark refused, but his mother said she wouldn't take the problem seriously until he did. It was the most ordinary thing in the world to forget where you had parked a car or locked up a bike. She had once spent an hour at the Three Lilies trying to find the Fiesta.

Because you're unhappy, Mark thought. Because you were thinking about Dad.

Mark made the call and Yasmin laughed. "The lads must have taken it," she said. There was a group at school, she said, who took bikes for joyrides and to steal parts. "Go and look in the car park behind the school—maybe they've dumped it there." Mark was upset; Yasmin seemed more amused than sympathetic. She didn't understand how important the scooter was

for their relationship. Mark's mother was gesturing to say that she wanted to speak to the girl, but Mark ended the call. He hadn't asked Yasmin point-blank if she remembered him leaving the Vespa outside the school, and the last thing he wanted was for his mother to ask her and discover that she hadn't been at school. "She knows I left it here," he said. "Otherwise she wouldn't say to look around the back, would she?"

At this point his mother saw someone she knew coming out of the school, a woman who walked her dog in the park where she walked hers. They began to chat, and the woman, who turned out to be a geography teacher, said that there were so many problems at the school because of the backgrounds the kids came from, and it was perfectly possible that Mark's Vespa had been stolen. Mark's mother was almost too jolly in her responses, fake somehow. It was embarrassing. The boy started off on his own to go around the back of the school. As he turned in to the car park the first thing he saw was his Vespa.

He felt a strong rush of joy at the sight of it. It was bright red, with a white seat and wheels and a lovely streamlined shape. He felt in his pocket for his keys to retrieve his helmet from under the seat. Then he saw that the motor was gone.

It took him three or four seconds to grasp this. First he sensed that the bike looked different, thinner and lighter. Odd. Then he realized that between the back wheel and the seat there was an empty space. He wanted to sit down on the wet ground and cry. Now the Vespa wasn't just missing—it was dead.

"Pull yourself together," Mark's mother said. "For heaven's sake!" They would have to go to the police. The scooter had cost more than two thousand pounds only six months ago. They'd have to report the crime, then go to the insurance people and make a claim.

Mark texted Yasmin, "It's there but they've taken the motor." "Awesome!" she texted back. Mark felt sick. Then his mother told him to remove the license plates in case they needed to be handed in at some point or other. Both of them were getting soaked now. Mark's mother went back around the school to fetch the Fiesta, which had some tools in it, and Mark tore a nail trying to pull

off one of the wet plates, which had jammed against the mudguard.

It was important to go to the police station at once because Mark's mother was leaving for Zambia tomorrow. She was going for six months, to teach at a school for poor children who would very likely never be able to afford a bicycle, never mind a scooter.

On arrival, they were fourth in the queue in a room that felt like a dentist's office, except that the posters were all about police recruitment and the bright future one could have in the department. Since his father had moved out, Mark had lost any sense of having a future. Even university seemed more a kind of limbo than a path to somewhere.

Yasmin had once told him that her parents would never get her a scooter. She had too many brothers and sisters. He thought how nice it was when she was sitting on the pillion with her arms around him and again he felt he might cry. Almost anything made him cry these days. When would he ever become a real man, he wondered sometimes.

"Round the back of the school, you say?" the policeman repeated, making a note. "And why did you go round the back, if you'd parked it at the front?"

"Because his girlfriend thought it might be there," Mark's mother said.

The policeman remarked that the question had been addressed to Mark,

and Mark said, "There's a car park. I thought it might be there."

"She goes to that school," Mark's mother explained.

The policeman said the computers were down and they would have to come back the following day to pick up the printed report, which could then be sent on to the insurance people. In the car on the way home, Mark's mother told him that he would have to do that himself. "I'll have left already."

**T**he following Wednesday, Mark, who lived in his college dorm in Liverpool during the week, called his father, who now also lived in Liverpool, but on the other side of town. Mark was in a prefab corridor in a building where he felt like a fish out of water. The signal was not great. He should have taken a gap year, he thought, but hadn't known what to do. He felt limp and inadequate. His father, as always, wanted to hear good news so that he wouldn't have to worry about him and could feel less guilty about leaving. He was busy. "The fact is," Mark told him, "Yasmin thinks she knows who took it. She says she might be able to get them to put it back on."

His father seemed to be finding it difficult to concentrate. He hadn't said where he was exactly, but Mark had the impression that he was with other people.

"You've reported it to the police, right?

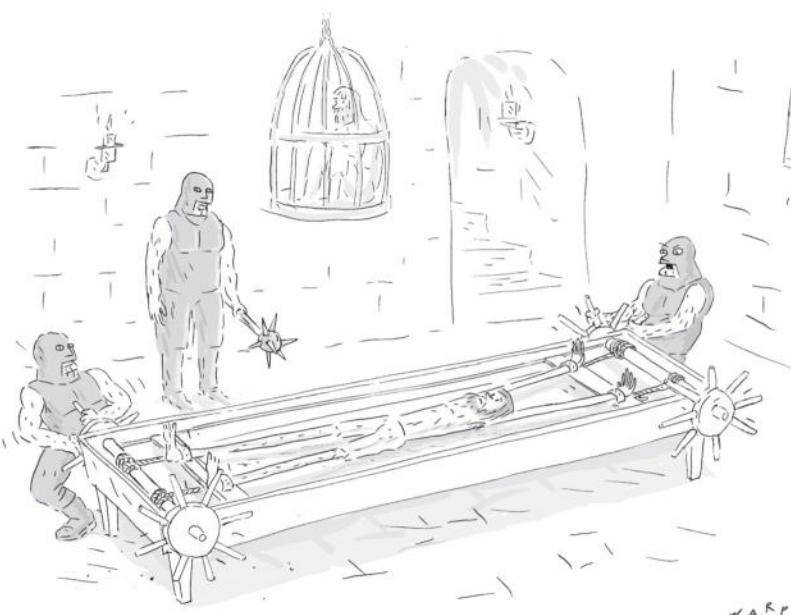
And the insurance, too? If the Vespa turns up now, on the road, with its motor and all, they might think you were lying to get the insurance money."

Mark hadn't thought of this. His father asked where the bike was now. Still in the car park behind the school, Mark said. Mark had phoned the insurance people to give them the details, but they'd said he'd have to get it moved to a repair place before they would look at it. He couldn't see the point of doing that, though, if Yasmin could persuade them to put the motor back on. Whoever they were. He wanted his bike back.

It might be better, his father thought—simpler, that is—if they collected the insurance for the old bike and got a new one. That would be the easy thing. Mark said emphatically that he didn't want a new bike. He wanted his old bike back. He himself couldn't understand why he felt so strongly about this.

In life-drawing class, there was the same fat old model who'd been posing for five weeks now. Mark pinned his paper, took his pencil in his hand, and looked at his subject. Why had he chosen a course where he was almost the only boy? Why hadn't he taken engineering or something? The woman was sitting on the floor this time, so the twenty or so students arranged in a semicircle were looking down at her. She had put a white towel on the floor, no doubt for reasons of hygiene. She had her legs out straight, slightly apart, and her hands were propping her up behind her back. Her breasts and stomach sagged. Her red face was tilted slightly back, showing her nostrils.

Drawing, Mark found the woman's fat disgusting but fascinating, too, its volume and orange-peel surfaces. Every few minutes, he exchanged a message with Yasmin, who had gone to school today, only to find that there was no teacher in her classroom. Yasmin was so slim, so lithe, so living. She'd had lots of boyfriends already. Mark worried about what she saw in him. He felt so vague beside her, so unsure of himself. Sharpening his pencil, he decided he would try to capture the grossness of the model's fat in as few lines as possible. Eye moving from subject to paper, Mark worked on the creases at the top of the woman's thighs, where they sank down between the legs at the crotch.



"You'd better talk—if this doesn't work, we make you do lunges."

Now the teacher stood behind him to look at his work. "Whoa," he said. "That's scary, Mike." "Mark," Mark said. The teacher apologized. "I'll get all the names before the end of term," he promised. Then Yasmin sent a text to say that the motor was back on the Vespa. "Fantastic, I love you," Mark texted back.

Now that Mark's mother was away, his father was happy to come home at the weekend to be with him, though Mark went back to Manchester only to see Yasmin. That Thursday, he had phoned the insurance people to say the motor had reappeared on the bike and he didn't want to file a claim. His father now insisted that before picking it up they had to go to the police again and change the report, because if, by a stroke of bad luck, the police stopped him for a routine check, or if he had an accident, God forbid, then they'd see that he was riding a bike that was supposedly stolen, and they might incriminate him for having tried to defraud the insurance company. "All these records are computerized," Mark's father said. They would only have to look up the license plates, and it would seem as if he were a criminal.

This time, there was no wait at the police station. Mark's father had some phone calls to make, and walked up and down on the pavement beside his Audi, talking in a low voice, while Mark explained to a tall, alert young policeman that the bike he had described as being vandalized was now working again. The young man dithered; he had thin white hands that were long and fidgety. Mark found hands the most difficult thing of all to draw. The policeman picked up a pen and put it down, scratched a knuckle, then invited Mark to come through to a small room with a table in the middle and left him there.

After ten minutes, an older man arrived and sat down opposite. He put the previous report on the table and laid both hands on it, as if to fix it there. These hands were heavy and meaty. His forehead was puckered and his cheeks were tensed in concentration and disapproval. Mark's heart sank. He wanted to phone his father and have him come in and help but he knew that the man wouldn't let him do this. Messages were vibrat-

ing in his pocket but he didn't dare to check them. The policeman looked up at him and their eyes met. "So how did this happen?" he asked.

"What?"

"First a motor disappears, then it reappears. I never heard of such a thing."

Mark hesitated. He tried to explain the circumstances, but his voice sounded defensive.

"Why did you park the bike at the school, if you were then going to take the bus into town? Why wasn't your girlfriend at school, if it was her school?"

Mark should have explained that he hated riding through the underpass and around the two big roundabouts. He shrugged his shoulders. "That's what I did," he said.

The policeman's jacket was rather tight across his barrel chest. He seemed very powerful physically. "Another thing I don't understand," he was saying, "is why you just left the bike there after the motor was stolen."

Mark was silent.

"The normal thing would have been to have it taken to a repair place, no? Or a demolition yard. Don't you think? As it is, it looks like you knew you could get the motor put back."

"This never happened to me before," Mark muttered. His hands were shaking. At this point his father knocked on the door and opened it. He asked if he could come in. The policeman said no, he couldn't come in and he certainly shouldn't be knocking on doors in police stations unasked. "Wait in the waiting room. If I want you, you'll be called." Mark felt his leg trembling. He hated himself.

"It may never have happened to you," the policeman said, "but it rather sounds like your girlfriend is an old hand at this, right? You leave your scooter in a prominent place and go off with her. Lo and behold it gets stolen. She tells you where to find it. Lo and behold there it is. With no motor. You report the theft and make an insurance claim. Your girlfriend says not to worry. Lo and behold the motor reappears. What is this story all about? Who is this know-it-all girlfriend?"

Mark had never been so frightened. "Her name is Yasmin," he said. He felt that he was betraying her. Her parents were Brazilian, he explained. They lived just the other side of Galaxy Shopping. She was seventeen. He had known her

almost a year. They had been going out for six months.

"Does she have a criminal record?" The policeman was very blunt. "Or a brother with a criminal record?"

Mark didn't know what to say. There ought to be someone here to protect him, he thought, to tell him how to react.

"She had some dope on her once," he said carefully, "when the police stopped us. On the Vespa. But she wasn't fined or anything."

"She smokes marijuana?"

"Everybody does," Mark said.

"Speak for yourself, young man. I certainly don't."

Nor did Mark. He hated smoke, except when watching it coil from Yasmin's lips. Somehow it was impossible to say this.

The policeman wanted the girl's full name, her address and phone number. He didn't know her exact address. But he gave the man her phone number. "You can warn her to expect a call from us," the policeman said. Then he dismissed the boy and called in his father, "for a word in private," he said.

In the waiting room Mark sent a text to Yasmin telling her that the police wanted to call her about the Vespa. "I'm so sorry, but how could I say the motor reappeared without mentioning you?" His hands were shaking so much he could barely text.

"The police think Yasmin is one of the vandals," Mark's father said, when he came out. "Or she's in with them, somehow." He swung the Audi out into traffic. "Otherwise, why would they put the motor back when presumably they removed it to sell it? You can see their point, frankly. They don't think you were involved, but they think she's leading you up the garden path."

After a few moments he added, "There's her dope smoking, too."

"What about it?"

"Well, it suggests a kind of life style that . . ."

"Yasmin's completely honest," Mark suddenly shouted. "Listen, she just told everyone at school that if the motor wasn't put back she was going to talk to the headmaster, because it was her boyfriend's bike. Then it reappeared. That's not her fault, is it? It was nice of her."

"The police think that at the very least she knows who they are," his

father said. "I mean, why would they do what she wants otherwise? What do they care about her boyfriend? And, if she knows the perpetrators of a crime, she has a legal responsibility to report them to the police."

"She does not know them!" Mark was indignant. What a pompous prick his father was, using expressions like "perpetrators of a crime"! The fact was, he said, his father didn't like Yasmin because she was an immigrant and colored and her dad worked in a warehouse. "You don't know what a nice person she is."

"If she's telling the truth, then she hasn't got anything to worry about, has she?" his father said.

From the police station, they drove to the other side of town, to Yasmin's school. They stood by the Vespa and examined it. It was looking a bit rain-stained after a week outside. Then they put the license plates back on. "Take it straight to the mechanic's," Mark's father told him. "And go really easy, in case something's not working properly. The last thing we need is an accident. Check the brakes first, and the steering."

It was a mild October morning and, getting onto the Vespa, Mark felt good. The helmet was still there under the seat. Amazingly, the motor started the first time using the battery and the starter, something it didn't always do even when he'd left it in the garage. Mark rode it slowly around the car park while his father watched. "It brakes fine," he told him and his father said, "O.K., go for it," and walked back to the Audi.

Mark took the bike out into traffic. The motor was a bit louder than it had been, he realized now, and it felt more powerful, too. It surged and growled when he twisted the accelerator. He grinned. Then he noticed that the rear-view mirror was missing. That was annoying, but he could drive without it. It felt so good when he got through the traffic on the circular road and turned right beyond the lights, heading out toward Pendlebury. There was fresh air from the fields, which were hazy in the autumn sunshine, and he felt absorbed in the movement of the bike along the strip of road between hedges and green verges, with the low wooded hills in the

distance. This was great. He was living again. Turning in to the mechanic's, he hit a pothole, had to put his foot down, and scraped his shoe.

After dropping the bike off, Mark had a mile and a half to walk home through the muddy countryside. He texted Yasmin to ask if there was any chance she could come out to his place and stay the night. Perhaps he could persuade his father to pick her up if she got the bus as far as Salford. Then they would find some way to get her home tomorrow. Mark began the long climb up the hill to the house. When his phone rang he expected it to be her.

"Mr. Paige?" It was the policeman. "We have been making some inquiries regarding your girlfriend's phone number, Mr. Paige." There was a pause. "Perhaps you can explain to us why this phone is registered in your name and not your girlfriend's."

Mark's heart was beating fast, as if he'd been caught out. But, again, there was a simple explanation. When they had gone to buy her phone, Yasmin hadn't had any identification with her, which it turned out the phone people needed for the sort of contract she wanted, so he had given his name and address as a guarantor.

The policeman cleared his throat. Again, there was a long pause. Then he said, "So, just by chance, the very day this young, er, lady goes to get a phone, she doesn't have any identification with her even though she knows which deal she wants and has presumably checked the requirements on the Internet. What's more, she just happens to go with someone who has got I.D. and is naïve enough to lend it to her, so that now if there should be any suspect traffic on this young lady's phone it cannot be attributed to her."

Mark was silent. He couldn't believe it.

"Could I have your father's phone number?" the policeman asked.

"Why?" he faltered.

The policeman was sarcastic. "If I ask for your father's number, perhaps it's because I want to speak to him."

"But you just spoke to him," Mark protested.

"And now we want to speak to him again. If you don't want to give me the number, I'll find it elsewhere."

Mark gave the policeman the number and immediately phoned his father. He explained that the police would soon be calling him and why.

"How was the scooter?"

"Fine."

His father asked Mark if he wanted him to come and pick him up, and Mark said he would much rather his father picked up Yasmin later. He didn't want to make him run about too much.

His father said, "O.K., if I have time. I think I'd better have a word with Yasmin about all this."

Now Mark started to text Yasmin about what had happened with the phone. But it was too complicated for a text. He phoned her, but she was with friends. There was laughter in the background. He tried to explain. Yasmin didn't seem worried at all. But for some reason this didn't cheer Mark up. "I'm making life so difficult for you," he texted.

In the empty house, he tried to follow the instructions his mother had left and prepare something proper to eat, but then couldn't be bothered. He ate cheese on toast and thought about the fat model sitting on the white towel to protect herself from the dirty floor. The woman didn't seem unhappy about being fat, or about the miserable job that she had. She always had a sort of Cheshire-cat smile on her face, as if she were proud that all the students were there drawing her. Mark realized that he envied her.

His father picked Yasmin up from the bus station at four. Mark sat in the back with her while his father drove. On the radio, two presenters were taking phone calls about the World Cup in Brazil and his father made a comment to Yasmin about this being a big moment for her country, but Yasmin said she didn't follow football at all. Then Mark's father asked her about the bike saga. Those were the words he used. Yasmin laughed and said that as soon as she'd heard what happened she had just put the word around that it was her boyfriend's bike. She'd been a bit surprised herself when the motor reappeared. "I guess I must be popular." She laughed.

His father was silent. When they got home, he suggested that they all have a beer together in the garden

## HAVING BOTH THE PRESENT AND FUTURE IN MIND

The split image, a glass box that can be divided in two like a warm-water aquarium with angelfish, some with tails lashing one way, others another. The high-rise windows all masquerading as insect eyes.

Inside, a house for a room in which an apple is bitten almost in half. A chair one gets up from.

Time can move from the general to the visual particular one piece at a time until you reach the infinitesimal where everything is airborne.

Place a grid over that and what you have is a tall building that's been imploded.

The roof ripped off, the fixtures removed as scrap for melting. Even copper wire can be stripped of its red rubber cover.

What's left will look as if it could be reconstructed, become electric again, but no longer dangerous. Although never again would there be that woman who stood up, walked over to a table, then turned to say, "I was just about to say," to a man in the midst of dissolving. The building like a maze, the individual pieces falling, some forward, some backward, the woman and man collapsing, each becoming a sacrifice to the fact of having been. I'm not saying you can change a shape without forever altering the inside. I'm saying the opposite. I'm saying that in some cases the inside persists until long after it doesn't.

—*Mary Jo Bang*

since the weather was fine, but Mark just wanted to take Yasmin to his bedroom. A couple of hours later, his father called upstairs. Mark was grateful to him for not coming up and knocking at least. He pulled on his jeans and went out onto the stairs, conscious of looking tousled. "Since I won't be seeing much of you now that Yasmin's here, I'm going to head back to my place," he said. Mark let his father hug him, but he didn't feel the relief that he normally felt when his parents went away. When he went back to the bedroom, Yasmin was in her panties at the window, smoking. Mark lay on the bed and stared at the ceiling.

"Couldn't you have told the police

that your mother had complained to the headmaster or something?" she asked.

"I'm sorry," he said. He didn't seem to say anything else these days.

"My parents'll keep me in on Saturdays again, and I won't be able to come over, even when you do get the Vespa back."

The smoke from her cigarette drifted into the room. It was a good thing his mother was away. She insisted that guests go right down to the road to smoke.

"Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck," Yasmin said.

Later they went downstairs, drank his father's beers, and watched TV, but both of them knew they were just waiting for that phone call from the police. Mark was supposed to read a book on

the phenomenology of art for a Monday seminar, but he couldn't concentrate.

"You'll leave me because of this, won't you?" he said.

Yasmin looked puzzled. She had a small sly mouth and stained teeth, lush frizzy hair, a puppy's body. "Why?" she asked.

Since Mark had started coming to Liverpool for the week, a sort of routine had developed whereby every Tuesday or Wednesday evening his father took him out to eat, or to the pub for a pint. Mark had been drawing the fat woman again. This time, she was lying on her side with her head propped on her elbow. She had brought three red cushions to lie on. His father took him to a Thai restaurant. "Have the police phoned Yasmin yet?" he asked.

"No," Mark said.

"Is she worried?"

"She's beginning to hope they won't call."

Mark's father said that he liked Yasmin. He hesitated. "But there's no real future for you two, is there? I mean, you're from different worlds."

Mark didn't look up from his curry.

"I wouldn't be surprised in the end if she did know the guys who took your motor," he said.

"She doesn't."

"It wouldn't be her fault if she did, would it? She seems the kind of girl who might move in circles like that."

"But she doesn't! Why don't you believe me?"

Mark's father asked when he would be getting the Vespa back.

"Friday afternoon."

The waitress brought another helping of rice. Mark's father kept trying to make conversation, asking questions about college, about his future plans, about his mother, about the restaurant, trying to be friendly, or to show that he was being friendly, but Mark didn't feel like talking. His father became impatient; he wanted the two of them to have a nice time together. Mark was very aware of this, but he couldn't have helped his father, even if he wanted to.

"Are you sure you don't want some noodles?" his father asked. "They're so good here."

Mark propped his chin on his hands and watched his father pour himself

some wine. "Maybe my future is turning into a fat slob," he said. "Covered in gross rolls of fat."

His father looked perplexed. "You hardly eat anything," he said. "You just need to do a bit of sport."

The police called Yasmin on Tuesday to say that she was invited to go to a police station near her home that Friday morning. With both parents.

"Good luck," Mark texted. He felt convinced that it was his fault. If he hadn't told Yasmin where he'd parked on the day the Vespa disappeared, if he'd said that he'd left the bike at the bus station, for example, she wouldn't have tried to help get the motor put back on, and none of this would have happened. What a bore I am, he thought. I should be like the fat woman, who doesn't give a damn about her big buttocks and oceans of cellulite. His mother's Facebook page was now full of pictures of her surrounded by bony black children. She said that it was impossible to go running where she was staying because it didn't feel safe.

On the train home Friday morning, Mark bought a turkey sandwich from the refreshment trolley, and then crisps and a Coke. At this very moment Yasmin is at the police station, he thought, because of me. From Manchester, he took a bus out to Pendlebury, after which it was a long walk to the mechanic's.

The mechanic said that the vandals had done a great job of putting the motor

back. The bike was working fine. He had put on a new mirror and a new brake light, changed the filters, and checked the brakes. As he spoke, Mark was looking at a calendar above his head in which a girl crouching behind a motorbike wearing only a black jacket had propped her two pointed breasts on the seat. She had frizzy hair like Yasmin's. "Seventy-eight pounds," the mechanic said.

Mark rode the Vespa home. It moaned pleasantly up the last slope. Riding always induced a happy mood of freedom and competence, which vanished the moment he took the helmet off. Perhaps he should wear it all the time, he thought. He went into the house and defrosted some soup his mother had left for him. Why hadn't Yasmin replied to his messages? He lost patience and called her, though he knew she preferred him to text. Her phone was off. Why? Didn't she realize he was worried? He was supposed to be writing an essay for the life class about the drawings he had done; he wriggled the drawings out of their tube and spread them on the living-room table. The first concentrated mainly on the bulk of the body. There was too much detail, lots of shading and cross-hatching. More recently, he had been trying to get at something about the face in relation to the body. It wasn't pretty, but it was a nice face. The mouth was relaxed and soft, not like his parents' mouths. If these things could be expressed in words, there would be no point in draw-

ing, Mark thought. Then he was so anxious that he ran out of the house and got on his Vespa again. He took the spare helmet with him, strapped to the back.

He had reached the circular road when his phone rang. Mark had a strict rule never to look at his phone while on the bike. He broke it. In two lanes of heavy traffic he reached into his pocket. After all, if he hadn't meant to break the rule, why would he have set the ring tone on max? With his right hand off the accelerator, the bike slowed and wobbled. Holding the phone, he grabbed the handlebar again and gave it a little burst of speed, conscious of a bus behind him. He tried to see the screen, but there was bright sunlight. He had to hold it right in front of his visor. The bike clipped the curb and wobbled again. The bus sounded its horn and swerved. Then he was over, with the bike on top of him and his helmet clunking on the pavement.

Mark lay still for a moment trying to take it in, then a girl around his age was next to him, asking if he was O.K. It seemed he was. His leg hurt, he thought, but he was definitely O.K. Thank God. Two men had arrived. They righted the bike and pulled it out of the traffic. The spare helmet was still attached. Mark sat on the pavement and took his helmet off. "Thank you," he said. "I'd better take it easy for a few minutes." His knee was sore. When he had got over the shock, he couldn't find his phone. It wasn't in his pockets; it wasn't on the pavement; it wasn't in the gutter or on the road. Now he really hated himself.

When Yasmin came out of school at four, Mark had been waiting almost an hour. He'd thought she finished at three-thirty. The traffic crept by on the road beside him, and the clouds marched overhead in the damp sky. There was a constant windy tug to the day that he just didn't feel part of. He didn't feel part of the world at all. All he had was the Vespa. Thank God he hadn't damaged the Vespa. Then a bell rang, and almost at once kids started streaming out. He sat up. After a few minutes Yasmin appeared, but of course she was with her friends, Sandy, Mike, Ray, and Georgina. Yasmin was the shortest of the group, her hair all over the place. But she was dressed more smartly than usual today. She even had a skirt on, a jacket, a button-up blouse.



For the police, no doubt. A mill of others hurried past. They were laughing, slouching, passing around cigarette papers. And Mark saw at once that Yasmin was happy. She was grinning. All five of them were happy together, lighting up cigarettes, at the end of the school week.

They came through the gate and saw him.

"Hi, Marky," Yasmin said. She was always a little cool when there were others around. They stood beside the Vespa. "We're going to the house, wanna come?"

She meant the empty house with the broken window, beyond the canal. They were going to smoke dope.

"How was it?" Mark asked. "This morning? I lost my phone. I don't know anything."

Yasmin grinned. "Fine. No worries."

"But—"

"Yazzy told 'em to go fuck 'emselves." Georgina laughed. She had a mocking smile.

"Asked 'em if they needed any spare parts for their big blue bikes," Ray said. "Didn't you, Yaz? Speaking of which . . ." He crouched down to look at the Vespa's motor.

"Are you coming?" Yasmin repeated. "How'd you lose your phone?"

"No," Mark said.

"Oh, come on!"

"Sue and Jan will be there, too," Georgina said. "And maybe Lisa. You know she has the hots for you."

Mark sat on his Vespa. "No."

Suddenly it was clear to him that they all knew perfectly well who had taken the motor.

"What are you going to do?" Yasmin asked wryly. As if the thought that he might have something to do was funny.

Mark said nothing. He had worried so much about her.

"Let's go," Mike said. Sandy and Ray were already moving off.

"How will I get to your place," Yasmin asked, "if we don't go together? Come on. Just one smoke then back to your place."

"No."

"Are you O.K.?" Yasmin asked. "Is the bike going O.K.?"

Mark tried a smile. "I'm really glad it was all right with the police."

Yasmin laughed. "Oh, they didn't know anything. Even Dad was on my side. They just wanted to scare me."

"The bike's going great," Mark said. "See you later."

"But how will we get in touch, if you've lost your phone? I already told my parents I was out tonight. Where shall we meet?"

Sitting on his Vespa, Mark was slightly above her. He didn't reply. His knee was hurting. Yasmin turned to follow the others, then turned back. Her eyes looked for his. She pursed her lips slightly, maybe forming a kiss, maybe an impatient pout. What was she going to do? Mark settled his helmet on his head and turned the key. The bike started. He twisted a little, patted the back seat, and gestured to the spare helmet.

Yasmin still hesitated. "Hey, dudes!" she shouted. Her friends were crossing the road.

Mark revved the bike and pushed it off its stand. He turned it to the road. Yasmin came to stand next to him and was shouting something again about times and phones over the noise of the motor. He shook his head. "Get on the back, stupid," he yelled. He was still shaking the spare helmet. "Come on, get on." He revved the bike harder. Yasmin grabbed the helmet and unclipped it.

As soon as her arms were around his waist, Mark surged off. The traffic was intensifying with the rush hour, but he drove faster than he usually did. He wove between cars. He accelerated and braked hard. It was good to feel the girl being thrown against him, then away. She held him tighter. Once he was off the circular road and in the country, Mark sped up close to fifty. Yasmin was shouting something. He didn't even try to hear what. He weaved the bike from side to side on purpose. Perhaps he was frightening her. He imagined riding with the fat model behind him, naked, posing, completely relaxed while Mark forced the bike to go as fast as it could. That would be something to draw. Racing up the last hill, he was just about to move across to turn right into the driveway when he saw a car close behind in the mirror. Damn. He braked to let it go by, then changed his mind, accelerated, and drove straight on past their house, up the slope beyond the village, then on toward the wooded hills and the horizon. ♦

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# THE CRITICS



POP MUSIC

## LATE STYLE

*New Order's continuing influence.*

BY ANWEN CRAWFORD

The English band New Order is thirty-five years old. Such is its influence on the large, hybrid musical territory we might call “synth pop” or “dance rock” that entire careers are impossible to imagine without it. There might have been no LCD Soundsystem, or the Rapture, or the flurry of similar acts that arose in New York in the early aughts; there would be no Radiohead, either. “It’s very difficult to genuinely impress my bandmates,” Phil Selway, the Radiohead drummer, said during a recent BBC Radio broadcast, introducing his guest, the New Order drummer Stephen Morris. His mere name, Selway explained, had reduced the other members of Radiohead to a state of hushed awe. “I made Radiohead go all quiet!” Morris replied, in his thick northern accent. “Blimey!”

The music of New Order has created a kind of communion between the melodic conventions of pop and the rhythmic possibilities of dance music—and also between traditional rock instruments (bass, guitar, drums) and electronic alternatives (drum machines, synthesizers, sequencers). The musicians give something heartfelt to their machines, while the machines propel the musicians beyond their human deficiencies. The result is songs that move toward the vibrancy of dance music but don’t always arrive, getting caught instead in little eddies of melancholy. New Order’s best songs tend to be long, spilling over the boundaries of pop’s three-minute template; they feel borne along by joy and sorrow in equal parts.

Last week, the band released “Music Complete,” its ninth studio album. In the decade since its previous major release, “Waiting for the Siren’s Call,” the keyboardist Gillian Gilbert has returned, after ten years of absence, and Peter Hook—whose fluent bass lines have formed one of New Order’s most recognizable qualities—has left, in a fug of acrimony. The members of New Order consistently downplay their individual contributions, preferring to present themselves as a unit, but that hasn’t stopped people from asking: Can a New Order record properly be a New Order record without Peter Hook? (But could it be one without Gillian Gilbert?) Where does the spirit of the band reside?

The answer, though it conforms to every cliché of rock and roll, may be that the spirit of New Order was strongest when the band was in its youth. “Music Complete” is certainly the best of New Order’s late-career albums, and the best since the underrated “Republic,” released in 1993. It contains a handful of songs to add to other treasures in the band’s catalogue, along with many that are forgettable by the group’s own standards. It is difficult for the musicians of New Order to surpass themselves, or to convince a listener that they have anything left to prove.

For the band’s first twelve years, it was closely linked with, though never officially signed to, the Manchester-based label Factory Records, which shunned formal contracts. Factory was more suc-

cessful as a conceptual prank than as a functioning business venture: it assigned catalogue numbers to a lawsuit, a Manchester night club named the Haçienda, and the Haçienda’s resident cat, before declaring bankruptcy, in 1992.

Factory was headed by the impresario and television journalist Tony Wilson (when he died, in 2007, his coffin was given a catalogue number), and the label’s graphic designer was Peter Saville, who is still responsible for creating all of New Order’s record sleeves. Saville’s designs for the band, using grids, color blocks, and stock photos, resemble advertising for a company that does not exist. Just as the members of New Order have tended to be subsumed by the group as a whole, the visual style creates a dislocation between the band and its audience.

When New Order fails to move—move the feet, move the heart—it is because the music and the image recede too far into the group’s expected pattern, so that the gap between the band and the listener is no longer mysterious but, rather, vacant. For another band, the title “Music Complete” might seem arrogant; for New Order it feels like a placeholder.

“Restless,” the album’s lead single, has a mood that New Order has explored many times before: a wakeful poignancy, like the dawn walk home after the best party of your life. (If New Order has never quite been a dance act, the music is nevertheless perfectly suited to the club-goer’s comedown.) The song moves smoothly, in a seamless blend of instruments; its craft is something that clumsier bands might covet. New Order can turn out a good pop song the way an athlete runs warmup laps. What “Restless” lacks is the small grain of perversity that has made other New Order songs as glorious as they are inimitable—“The Perfect Kiss,” for instance, from 1985, which includes an interlude of synthesized, ribbitting frogs. Why frogs? Why not.

One of the new album’s best songs is “Stray Dog,” which features a gravely spoken-word narration by Iggy Pop, very different in tone from the singer and guitarist Bernard Sumner’s light and sometimes colorless singing voice. The friction between the vocals and the deft instrumental



*The members of New Order downplay their individual contributions, but their new album is without the bassist Peter Hook.*

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arrangement—a hint of violins; guitar that has borrowed its texture from Pop's rough presence—makes for something worth paying attention to. And Pop's guest appearance is highly evocative, whether deliberate or not.

New Order arose out of Joy Division, and in 1980, when that group's singer and lyricist, Ian Curtis, committed suicide, it was widely reported that the record left on his turntable was Pop's solo début, "The Idiot."

Sumner, Hook, and Morris all played in Joy Division. Over the years, it has become nearly impossible to cut through the myth of Joy Division to the four young friends whose inexperienced punk racket was transformed, by their own sheer will and by the gifts of their producer, the late Martin Hannett, into unearthly beautiful music. But if any group has the right to reclaim Joy Division it is New Order, and the band does so on "Stray Dog" and on a track called "Singularity," which begins with eerie, wavering noises and a prominent bass line; both evoke Joy Division's sound, which was also New Order's early sound.

New Order covering itself works better than when it tries to sound like Chic, which the group does on the songs "Tutti Frutti" and "People on the High Line." In the past, New Order's willingness to absorb new sounds in dance music placed it in pop's vanguard, but to evoke disco now, two years after the disco-revivalist high point of Daft Punk's "Get Lucky" (co-written by Chic's Nile Rodgers), feels belated. How cruel that the architects of a style, despite their longevity and their widespread influence, should find themselves eclipsed by their younger pupils.

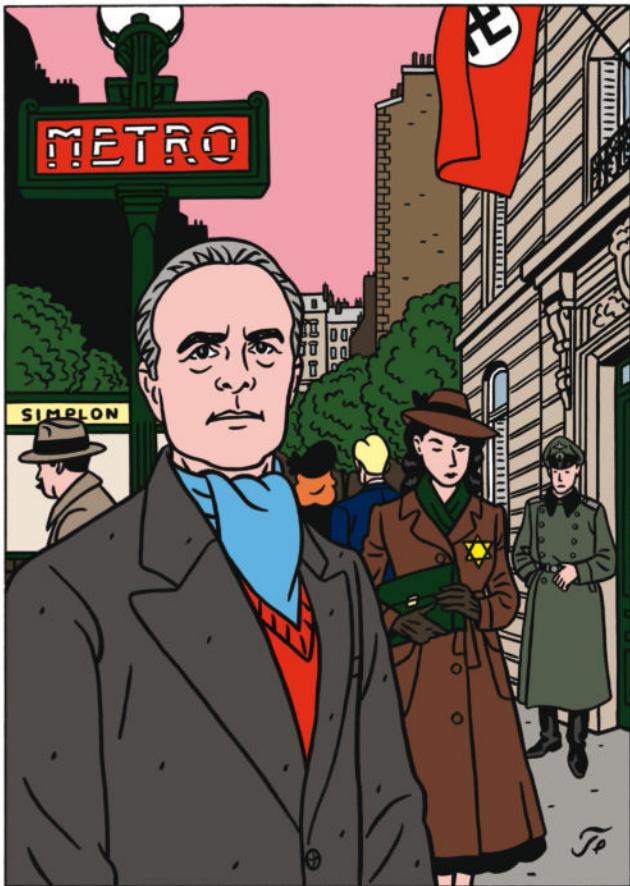
The final song on "Music Complete" is "Superheated," and it features Brandon Flowers, of the Las Vegas group the Killers, a name taken from a fictional group in a New Order music video. The mood of the song is reflective, almost stately, though the lyrics (a career-long weakness for New Order) are banal. "Now that it's over," Flowers sings. New Order was born as a kind of historical accident, out of personal tragedy, and has achieved in the wake of that misfortune more than most bands will ever achieve. Perhaps now, at long last, it really is over. ♦

A CRITIC AT LARGE

# THE UNFORGOTTEN

*Patrick Modiano's mysteries.*

BY ALEXANDRA SCHWARTZ



**N**ight is falling when the girl leaves her dance class at the Théâtre du Châtelet. It's late afternoon, the cusp of December, 1941—the darkest month coming to close out what has been, for Paris, a very dark year. The anxieties and privations of the Occupation gnaw at the city. Winter is sure to be bitter.

For the past few months, the girl has lived with her father in a shabby hotel on the Boulevard Ornano, a street that slices behind the blanched dome of the Sacré-Cœur to end just before the city does, at the Eighteenth Arrondissement's northern limit. He is Austrian-born, registered as a Jew. So far, he's been able to keep his job at the medical clinic where he works, though the doctor who protected him has fled to Montpellier, in the free zone.

The girl, who is called Ingrid Teyrsen, is sixteen but looks older. The Métro is crowded and stuffy, and she decides to get off a few stops early. It's five-thirty now. At six, a curfew will go into effect in the Eighteenth Arrondissement, a response to an attack carried out on German soldiers there. Armed men cluster near the mouth of the Métro, ready to seal off the neighborhood. As Ingrid walks along the south side of the Boulevard de Rochechouart, which falls in the Ninth Arrondissement, looking across the street to where the Eighteenth begins, she finds that she can't bring herself to cross that invisible frontier. It is six, then ten past.

It was as if she had jumped from a sinking ship just in time. She didn't want to think about her father because she still felt too close to that dark, silent zone from which no

one would ever be able to escape now. For her part, she had only just managed it.

She no longer felt the sense of suffocation that had come over her in the métro, and a little while before at the Barbès-Rochechouart crossroads at the sight of the motionless soldiers and policemen. It seemed to her that the avenue opening out in front of her was a big forest path which led, farther on, to the west, to the sea whose spray the wind was already blowing in her face.

This passage is from "Honeymoon," a novel by Patrick Modiano, the French writer who won last year's Nobel Prize in Literature. In 1988, two years before its publication, he had come across a missing-persons notice in a copy of the newspaper *Paris-Soir* from December, 1941. Perusing old documents is a preferred activity of Modiano's. Yellowing newspapers sold by *bouquinistes* along the Seine; address books filled with now obscure names that must be soothed and prodded, like piano keys stiff from disuse, into revealing their true notes; school-enrollment registers and records of the arrests and deportations and births of people long dead, painstakingly obtained through bureaucratic supplication: these provide the factual seedbed of his fiction.

It is a fiction of hints and intimations, of traces collected in pursuit of the involuntarily disappeared as well as of the willingly vanished—the account of the mysteries investigated, if not exactly solved, by a distinctly unsavage detective. "I'm trying to search for clues," he writes of his method. That "trying" gives the project a melancholy cast. Modiano was born, near Paris, on July 30, 1945, a date that is as firm yet arbitrary a boundary as the one that separated the open Ninth Arrondissement from the closed Eighteenth on a winter night nearly four years before. The Americans arrived in Paris the previous August; had he been born a year earlier, his life would have touched the poisoned terrain of the Occupation. But he wasn't, and that narrow escape set him searching for his counterparts—people like the subject of the *Paris-Soir* notice, who had found themselves thrust up against the other side of the dividing line.

**H**er name was Dora Bruder. According to the paper, she was sixteen, a bit over five feet tall, with an "oval-shaped face, gray-brown eyes, gray sports jacket, maroon pullover, navy

blue skirt and hat, brown gym shoes.” Anyone with information about her was asked to contact M. and Mme. Bruder, at 41 Boulevard Ornano. Modiano had spent time in the neighborhood as a child in the fifties, going to the flea markets with his mother, and again as a young man, haunting the cafés. “Perhaps, though not yet fully aware of it, I was following the traces of Dora Bruder and her parents,” he wrote later.

Modiano tracked down records and addresses; he gathered photographs and letters; he talked with a cousin of Dora’s. He found out that she was the only child of Ernest Bruder, a Viennese-born Jew and disabled laborer, and Cécile Burdej, a Jewish seamstress from Hungary. Though Ernest had registered himself and his wife in the census of 1940, the first in France in almost seventy years to ask about religion, he hadn’t registered Dora. She was enrolled in a Catholic boarding school on the other side of the city, and it was from there that she ran away in December of 1941.

Novelists are compulsive as a breed, and Modiano is an exceptionally compulsive novelist. He has come out with a book every couple of years or so since 1968, and though a few, like “Honeymoon,” have been quietly available in English for some time, a harvest of new translations has just arrived: his three earliest novels, grouped together as “The Occupation Trilogy” (Bloomsbury), as well as his most recent, “So You Don’t Get Lost in the Neighborhood” (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), plus a memoir, “Pedigree” (Yale). By early next year, nearly twenty of his books will be in print here. Such a sudden bounty should, by all rights, lead to writer fatigue, but Modiano is an ideal writer to gorge on, in part because his books are airy and short—generally a hundred and fifty pages at the most, hypnotically carried along by sentences built simply enough to survive their hurried journeys into English—and in part because they make up a system as beguiling and complete as any in con-

temporary literature. Again and again, he returns to the same names and places and events, “patterns,” as he says, “on a tapestry woven while half asleep.” Laced together by their internal repetitions, the books echo and contradict and amplify one another until they come to seem like a single work.

Modiano’s driving compulsion is the need to know—to dig up information long concealed or lost. If that urge has obvious moral implications when applied to France’s murky memory of its wartime complicity, it is born from an impulse more primal than the ethical one. “I know the life stories of these shadows is of no great interest to anyone, but if I didn’t write it down, no one else would do it,” says the narrator of “Ring Roads,” his third novel. (A muted first person is Modiano’s standard fictional uniform.) The shadows in question are a group of rotten war profiteers, shown in mottled, impulsive closeup. There’s the blackmailing newspaperman desperately afraid of going broke; the high-riding coquette who got her start as a girl rented out to passengers on overnight trains; the brutish legionnaire, a black marketeer and Jew-hater, who is imagined on his return to Paris after his posting in Morocco: “He was terrified of crossing the street, and in a blind panic on the Place de l’Opéra, asked a policeman to take his hand and lead him across.” That flash of human frailty gives weight to the novelist’s beautiful lie—that he is reporting on people who exist beyond the boundaries of his invention.

As he slowly pieced together the story of Dora Bruder, Modiano took a shortcut through fiction and wrote “Honeymoon,” designating the character of Ingrid as Dora’s double. His own stand-in, Jean, is an “explorer,” a maker of documentaries about exotic places. Instead of going to Brazil to shoot his next film, he hides from his wife at a cheap hotel to contemplate more ephemeral quarry. In the sixties, as a young drifter, Jean had met a couple, Rigaud and Ingrid, who lived modestly on the Riviera. He was drawn to their generosity, and to Ingrid’s cryptic insouciance. At night, as neighbors approached the house to invite them to a party, she and Rigaud turned off all the lights. “We’ll pretend to be dead,” she had



*“I’m just saying, maybe we wouldn’t need the swords if we didn’t wear these clothes.”*

explained. "There are moments when we are incapable of exchanging a single word with anybody...."

An impenetrable world is hidden in that ellipsis. Some years later, Jean learned that Ingrid had committed suicide; the puzzle of her life has come to obsess him. The matter of memory is organized, by the whim of association, into its own private sequences, and "Honeymoon," smoothly translated by Barbara Wright, follows the same logic, opening with Jean's discovery of Ingrid's death and weaving back and forth through time to lead up to his speculation of what might have happened to her during the war—the root, he suspects, of her attraction to disappearance. He pictures her tightrope-like walk along the border of the Ninth Arrondissement, and her panic when she realizes that she can't go home. In a café, a young man in a threadbare jacket smiles at her: Rigaud. They are bound in an instant by instinctive trust. Ingrid is vulnerable as both a minor and a Jew, and so they go into hiding—their "honeymoon"—in a Mediterranean beach town. Before she leaves Paris, she slips back to the Boulevard Ornano to see her father. He put an ad in the newspaper to find her, she learns: Ingrid Teyrsen, sixteen, a bit over five feet tall, "oval face, grey eyes." Then he was taken by the police.

This is a triply layered fiction. Modiano imagines Jean, Jean imagines Ingrid, and, through Ingrid, Modiano tries to glimpse what he can of Dora—"a place where she had been, a detail of her life." Turning to invention to get at deeper realities of experience is fiction's righteous mission, and "Honeymoon" performs it beautifully. But truthfulness isn't the same as the truth. Why had Dora run away? She had a rebellious nature, Modiano learned from her cousin. As for life at school, he could imagine that himself: the sinister nuns, the tedious prayers, the oppressive silence. But he kept returning to the question of where Dora had gone when she left, and how she had spent her time.

Modiano staged his own escape from boarding school at the age of fourteen. He had lived away from home since he was a child, not because his parents wanted to protect him but because they didn't care enough to try.

"I'm a dog who pretends to have a pedigree," he announces in "Pedigree," his memoir of his early life, published in France when he was nearly sixty. His mother was (in Mark Polizzotti's lucid translation) "a pretty girl with an arid heart": Louisa Colpeyn, a Flemish actress who came to Paris during the war to work for a German-controlled film-production company and settled into a career of bit parts, travelling with the theatre and neglecting her sons. When Patrick was six and Rudy, his brother, four, she sent them to live with a friend in Jouy-en-Josas, a town on the outskirts of Paris. "Strange women came and went," Modiano recalls, women who wore men's clothes and drove American cars and worked in night clubs. The stay came to an abrupt end when the friend was arrested for burglary. There was never any money, and Louisa leaned relentlessly on Patrick for support. At twenty-four, still susceptible to her demands, he went with her to hock a gold pen presented to him at a literary-awards ceremony: "They gave me only two hundred francs for it, which my mother pocketed, steely-eyed."

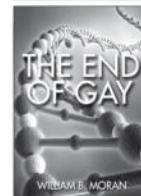
Modiano's parents had met during the war and separated shortly after it ended. Alberto Modiano grew up in Paris; on his paternal side, he came from a Jewish family with roots in Tuscany. (His mother was French.) During the Occupation, he traded on the black market under a variety of aliases, doing business with people mixed up with the Gestapo. Collaboration, in Alberto's case, was an ironic necessity: he hadn't registered himself as a Jew, or as anything else, and, while his lack of legal identity helped to shield him from deportation, it also barred him from legitimate work. He had circulated in the criminal underworld since he was in his teens, and spent his life conducting a tangle of unprofitable business dealings with a band of shady associates, thugs and thieves who presented themselves as if ready-made for his son's fiction.

Alberto was hardly a warmer parent than Louisa. In one harrowing episode, Patrick, fourteen years old and stranded alone in London, desperately collect-calls Alberto, "who wishes me good luck, in an indifferent voice." The cruelty seems all the greater considering that Alberto, by then, had only one

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child; Rudy had died at the age of nine, a loss that devastated Patrick. But where Modiano hardens his heart against his selfish mother, he is preoccupied with the riddle of his father. He senses that Alberto's quest for wealth and status was rooted in the Occupation: "He never told me what he had felt, deep inside, in Paris during that period. Fear? The strange sensation of being hunted simply because someone had classified him as a specific type of prey, when he himself didn't really know what he was?"

In the spring of 1965, Louisa, "foaming at the mouth," sent Patrick to Alberto's apartment to collect a child-support payment he owed her. Alberto slammed the door in his son's face; his shrewish girlfriend called the police. Together, father and son were taken to the station in a caged van so that Alberto could press charges against the "hooligan."

The trip was a perverse reprise of one that Alberto had made in February of 1942, when he was picked up during a sweep by the Jewish Affairs police, a terrifyingly close call. If Alberto made the connection, he said nothing, an especially keen injustice, Modiano felt, since "I had embarked on a book—my first—in which, putting myself in his shoes, I relived his feelings of distress during the Occupation." While Alberto turned to the law to sever himself from Patrick, Patrick turned to literature to make common cause with Alberto: "I wanted my first book to be a riposte to all those who, by insulting my father, had wounded me. And, on the terrain of French prose, to silence them once and for all."

That book, "La Place de l'Étoile" (1968), appears in "The Occupation Trilogy." Its title is a dark pun: if, during the war, you asked a Jew where the Place de l'Étoile was, he could either point to the nimbus of streets circling the Arc de Triomphe, one of them housing Gestapo headquarters, or to the yellow star on his chest. The Jew in question is the pointedly named Raphaël Schlemilovitch, a tubercular intellectual and playboy who restlessly zips through his historical acid trip of a life. He beds Eva

Braun and gets analyzed by Freud, sells pure-blooded French girls into sex slavery and enlists in the Gestapo for a lark. The lustful, conniving Schlemilovitch, in other words, is an impish amalgam of anti-Semitic tropes, and if Modiano intended his book as an assault on French memory—still blocked, two decades after the war, where Vichy's persecution of French Jews was concerned—he also

meant to mock his country's literary arbiters, willing to open their club to the distinguished token Jew but not to the unfettered Jewish id. "They had expected better manners from a Jew," Schlemilovitch thinks, after staging a play in which, among other things, a son wearing an S.S. uniform tries to choke his skullcapped father:

I'm an ungrateful wretch. A boor. I have appropriated their clear and limpid language and transformed it into a hysterical cacophony.

They had hoped to discover a new Proust, a rough-hewn Yid polished by contact with their culture, they came expecting sweet music only to be deafened by ominous tom-toms. Now they know where they stand with me. I can die happy.

The same sentiment could apply to a book published the following year, equally intent on rejecting notions of good Jews and good sons: "Portnoy's Complaint." But where Alexander Portnoy's neuroses and sexual antics marked him as a new kind of American, Raphaël Schlemilovitch's exploits put him in a cultural no man's land. "I am not a son of France," he says, but he's not a son of Israel, either. When he goes there, the Sabras are disgusted by his European cosmopolitanism and send him straight back to the Continent.

Modiano never wrote another book like "La Place de l'Étoile." That's a good thing. The novel burns out on the high heat of its own aspiration; its frenetic, syncopated style is as deafening as that of Schlemilovitch's play. (You want to applaud the translator, Frank Wynne, for sheer endurance.) Mugging as Schlemilovitch allowed Modiano to blast through the noxious fog of stereotypes his father had had to contend with, but it didn't help him get closer to un-

derstanding the man himself. In his next novel, "The Night Watch" (1969), Modiano approached Alberto from a subtler angle. His narrator, a young man recruited by a gang of collaborators to spy on a Resistance cell, and then by the cell to spy on the collaborators, does his best to suspend his conscience in the interest of staying alive, even as he grows increasingly repulsed by the moral blight he helps spread.

It was in his third book, "Ring Roads" (1972), that Modiano set his course as a novelist. Rather than write from a perspective aligned with Alberto's, as he had previously done, Modiano decided instead to write as a son in search of his father—to impersonate himself. Serge Alexandre, the narrator, hasn't seen his father, Chalva Deyckcaire, in years, and doesn't know what's become of him. He imagines travelling back in time to befriend Deyckcaire during the war, before he was born—a Jew without identity papers, trying to remain useful to the black marketeers whose favor he depends on for his survival. Deyckcaire isn't the kinetic showoff of Modiano's first novel or the moral dilettante of his second, but a quiet man, painfully awkward, observed by his son with a yearning flecked with contempt:

He gave a faint smile, more a tremor of the lips, as though afraid of being hit, and I pitied him. This feeling I had always experienced with regard to him, which caused a burning pain in my gut.

That is Modiano the son, at once moved and repulsed by the intimation of his father's weakness. And that, too, is Modiano the writer, at home at last in the "clear and limpid language" so despised by his own Schlemilovitch before he had learned that silence was a medium more conducive to mystery than noise was.

Memory is a mutable element, fickle in its suggestibility. It can be tricked to expand far beyond its true bounds, and yet, if overburdened, is liable to shut down altogether. Guy Roland, the narrator of "Missing Person," which appeared in 1978 and is one of Modiano's finest novels, suffers from this kind of profound forgetting. It's the mid-sixties; he can't remember anything that happened to him before the



previous decade. He doesn't even know his real name. The war seems to have something to do with it, but those years are a blank. Guy has been trained as a private detective, and he decides to apply his skill to his own life, working backward to uncover his past. "Is it really my life I'm tracking down?" he wonders. "Or someone else's into which I have somehow infiltrated myself?"

The pull of buried memory is also at the center of Modiano's most recent novel, "So You Don't Get Lost in the Neighborhood," translated by Euan Cameron. Jean Daragane, a reclusive writer in his sixties, gets a telephone call from Gilles Ottolini, a stranger who has found his address book in a train station. He insists on returning it in person: there's a name in the book that he's come across while researching a murder that took place decades before, and he wants more information. Daragane explains that he has no memory of the name. Gilles is skeptical, pointing out that Daragane used it for a character in his first novel. But Daragane hardly remembers his first novel, either. Soon, Gilles's girlfriend, Chantal, a young femme fatale with a husky voice and a small scar on her cheek, calls Daragane and insists that he come to her apartment in secret. She has a dossier of materials on the murder. Could he look it over and see if he can help them?

In short, Modiano has set up a moody, delectable noir. Who are Gilles and Chantal, and how will they worm their way into Daragane's life? And yet Daragane is drawn to solve a different mystery. Inside the dossier, he finds a copy of a passport photograph of a child from the fifties. The face is his. And he does recognize the name mentioned in one of the documents, Annie Astrand. She was the young woman living in the Paris suburbs in whose care his heedless mother had left him when he was small. Annie, who worked in a night club, had taken him to get the passport photo taken. But where were they going? He loved her with the special urgency of an unwanted child. Then she vanished from his life. How?

And so one mystery opens like an estuary onto a greater one, whose solution, if it comes, is sure to lead only to

more questions. The same thing happened in "Dora Bruder," the book that Modiano wrote about his search for the real girl from the Boulevard Ornano. By the time he finally published it, in 1997, he had learned more than he could ever have hoped when he came across the terse newspaper clipping nearly a decade before. In April of 1942, four months after running away, Dora had been found and returned home. By then, her father had been sent to Drancy, an internment camp on the outskirts of Paris; he would have been arrested around the same time as Modiano's own father. Dora ran away again, and this time was herself sent to Drancy, and then, like both of her parents, to Auschwitz. But the months of her freedom were still a blank, and, by the end of the book, Modiano had resolved that they would stay that way:

I shall never know how she spent her days, where she hid, in whose company she passed the winter months of her first escape, or the few weeks of spring when she escaped the second time. That is her secret. A poor and precious secret that not even the executioners, the decrees, the occupying authorities, the Dépôt, the barracks, the camps, History, time—everything that defiles and destroys you—have been able to take away from her.

Modiano's fiction is the art of speculation. He had already used that art on Dora's behalf, creating, in "Honeymoon," a character in her image, and sending her to wait out the war with a companion to protect her. But speculation can't redeem what really happened, just as memory can't be counted on to explain it. Years ago, Jean Daragane remembers, he had gone to the town where he had lived with Annie to see if he could find any remnants of his life there to include in his first novel. He knocked on the door of the kindly doctor who had cared for him as a boy. He had heard stories about the odd people who lived across the street, he said. Did the doctor remember? Yes, but not very much. He walked with Daragane to the bus station, then took him by the arm: "The best witness could be the child who once lived there. You would need to find him...." We all hold the keys to mysteries of our own making, Modiano tells us. If only we knew where we hid them. ♦

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# NAKED CITIES

*The death and life of urban America.*

BY ADAM GOPNIK



New York's grid wasn't the result of a long-range plan but more of a big "Why not?"

Cities can't win. When they do well, people resent them as citadels of inequality; when they do badly, they are cesspools of hopelessness. In the seventies and eighties, the seemingly permanent urban crisis became the verdict that American civilization had passed on itself. Forty years later, cities mostly thrive, crime has been in vertiginous decline, the young cluster together in old neighborhoods, drinking more espresso per capita in Seattle than in Naples, while in San Francisco the demand for inner-city housing is so keen that one-bedroom apartments become scenes of civic conflict—and so big cities turn into hateful centers of self-absorbed privilege. We oscillate between "Taxi Driver" and "The Bonfire of the Vanities" without arriving at a stable picture of something in between.

Has it ever been acceptable to regard a big city as admirable through and through? Maybe in books about

Paris and London from around 1910 to the Second World War, and in books about New York in the years just after the Second World War, before the Dodgers moved and the big fractures began. For the rest, whether it's Victorian London or post-sixties New York, pop novels and scholarly urbanism are most often voiced in a tone of complaint or querulous warning. (The outlier is the architectural historian Reyner Banham's 1971 "Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies," still the best book ever written about an American city, its happiness fuelled by an Englishman's perversity: Everyone says L.A. sucks? I'll show you it shines.) Nothing urban would be more likely to evoke disgust than a study promoting a benign picture of Bloomberg's New York—even though, in reality, that city was relatively peaceful (and self-healing from the worst war wound in its history) and prosperous (if more and more unevenly so), with the parks

restored or expanding and the subways so safe that they became crowded at two or three in the morning. Those of us who dreamed of the High Line as an improbable public benefit, and then saw it come true, had to accept that it would next become a subject of ridicule, as a cynical developer's amenity, a green-tinted scam.

The reason that perceptions of cities switch so radically is twofold. Cities are the contradictions of capitalism, spelled out in crowds. They are engines of prosperity and inequality in equal measure, and when the inequality tips poor they look unsavable; when it tips rich, they look unjust. And then cities enfold a subtler contradiction—they shine by bringing like-minded people in from the hinterland (gays, geeks, Jews, artists, bohemians), but they *thrive* by asking unlike-minded people to live together in the enveloping metropolis. While the clumping is fun, the coexistence is the greater social miracle, though not one that lends itself to stories. Greenwich Village and Park Slope and Southie count as homes and get reverent treatment; a musical might be made of hipsters and Hasidim learning to live together in Williamsburg. But a movie about the lives of the people in a single car on the 6 train would trail off into inconsequence, since the point is that city kinds and lives are so different that contiguity is their only coinciding point. (The one proviso of the local story is that the neighborhood must be under assault and the narrator must side with the old ways, even if he or she is representative of new ones. And so Ray, in Lena Dunham's beautifully observed, Brooklyn-based "Girls," runs for the local community board as a champion of preservation, not transformation, though he is utterly typical of the transformative kind.)

The things that give cities a bad conscience are self-evident: seeing the rise of 432 Park Avenue, the tallest, ugliest, and among the most expensive private residences in the city's history—the Oligarch's Erection, as it should be known—as a catchment for the rich from which to look down on everyone else, it is hard not to feel that the civic virtues of commonality have been betrayed. Every day brings news of old

favorites closed, familiar neighborhoods homogenized, ethnic enclaves turned over to the legions of Capital, not to mention Oberlin and Bard.

Yet the social crises that cities face are remarkably consistent, country to country and town to town. Very little that is going on in New York, from plutocratic excess to outlying gentrification, is not also going on, with different emphases and origins, in London: the same tales of people who drink wine and lattes buying the property of those who drink whiskey and beer. At the same time, cities *are* local. Saying that Manhattan and central London share the same problems is like saying that a man dying of drink in London is like one doing the same in Manhattan. It's true, but all the local conditions—what he's drinking, where he drinks it, who takes him home, and what kind of home he goes to—are so different that a story about the drunk in either place becomes a story about the place. Cities are at once the most cosmopolitan and the most particular of subjects; they require, and rarely receive, a view sufficiently wide-eyed as to become effectively double.

The foundation of the city is its spatial organization, the way its streets meet and the way its citizens travel on them. Gerard Koeppel's "City on a Grid" (*Da Capo*) tells the too little-known tale of how and why Manhattan came to be the waffle-board city we know. He shows us that the grid, far from being a long-range plan imposed by a class of managers, was the result more of a shrug, an inconclusive meeting, and a big "Why not?" Koeppel reproduces the key paragraph of the Gouverneur Morris report of 1811:

Whether they should confine themselves to rectilinear and rectangular Streets, or whether they should adopt some of those supposed Improvements by Circles, Ovals, and Stars, which certainly embellish a plan . . . they could not but bear in mind that a City is to be composed principally of the Habitations of men, and that strait sided and right-angled Houses are the most cheap to build and the most convenient to live in.

Koeppel argues, convincingly, that the show of hardheaded rationality here is merely a show. There was no

good commercial reason to make a thrifty city of intersections at right angles. London, the model of an imperial commercial city, had its ovals and organic oddities and still prospered. Philadelphia had lovely squares interrupting its own version of the grid. Straight-sided and right-angled houses can be built in circles as well as on street corners. The details of New York's grid turn out to be surprisingly haphazard and improvisational in their origins. As Koeppel points out, no one has ever provided a good explanation for why the wide two-way streets were chosen to fall where they do—at Fourteenth, Twenty-third, Thirty-fourth. In general, he persuades us, the impulse behind the grid was less the rationalizing impulses of the Enlightenment than the eternal desire of a bureaucratic commission to finish its report, accented, later, by the eternal real-estate developers' urge to have regularized lots to develop.

A lost city of stars and ovals may appeal to us more, but one wonders if it would have altered the city's story much. The history of the grid suggests that its character is determined by its uses more than the other way around. Mansions that arose within it had a fenced, forbidding look, as in pictures of early Fifth Avenue; the clustering of poor immigrants seemed to create crowded streets and slums not terribly different from those in Paris or Chicago.

Koeppel certainly recognizes the ambiguities of the grid, but he seems unsure what to make of them; early in his book, he darkly insists that the dead hand of the rectilinear grid "favors private interest over public convenience," and cites a German urban planner who claimed that "mystic" peoples favor organic cities over regularized ones. But any town that has Walt Whitman as its bard can hardly be accused of forcing narrowly straight-sided views on its singers. Rectilinear the grid may be, but it twists and turns in our imaginations as much as any winding road.

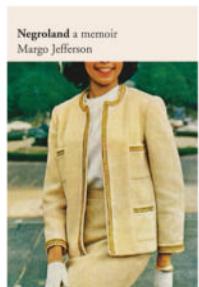
The grid, useful as an accelerant for pedestrians and horse-drawn vehicles, ended up being unintentionally well-adapted to the imperialism of the car; a short ride in a London cab can take forever, while taxi- and Uber-drivers

race up and down the midnight Manhattan avenues at hyper-speeds. Evan Friss's forthcoming "The Cycling City: Bicycles & Urban America in the 1890s" (Chicago) wants, in turn, to show us a forgotten parenthesis when the city had not yet yielded to the car. But he ends up showing mainly how terrific research and a feeling for detail can be undermined by the pieties of the contemporary social sciences. Common sense wins, barely, but not without the author taking many frightened-looking glances over his shoulder to see if the consensus of the discipline is gaining on him.

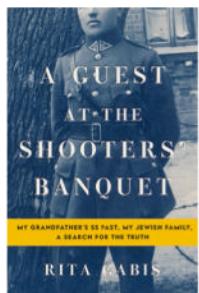
The consensus of the discipline takes a dim view of common-sense considerations (say, that people rode bikes because they were the best way to get places before cars). More sinister Foucauldian *épistèmes* must be shown to govern social life: any social explanation that can't be expressed as a conspiracy theory involving bourgeois society stamping out Difference is inadequate to the phenomenon, even if the phenomenon is on two wheels with gears and going many different places at once. Still, Friss has a good story to tell. In the late nineteenth century, bicycles were not just a sweet means of romantic transport—"Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer do," and all that—but a technological triumph creating fanatical followers and interest groups. The bicycle was more like a personal computer than like a love seat. There were "dozens of exclusive bicycle clubs dotting America's leading cities. . . . Libraries, card rooms, and billiard tables kept members busy while dumb-waiters shuttled food from kitchen hands to hungry cyclists." Women considered them "an almost utopian instrument," Friss says, and quotes a contemporary source: "Now and again a complaint arises of the narrowness of woman's sphere. For such disorder of the soul the sufferer can do no better than to flatten her sphere to a circle, mount it, and take to the road."

Friss is a demon researcher, and his book is full of revelatory facts: who knew that the bicycle lobby played a key role in the Chicago mayoral election of 1887? Yet one feels impatient as he tortuously tries to track academic

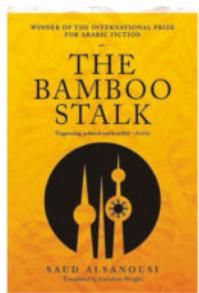
## BRIEFLY NOTED



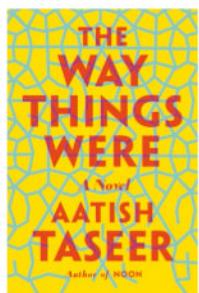
**NEGROLAND**, by Margo Jefferson (Pantheon). Defining “Negroland” as the stratum of black America “where residents were sheltered by a certain amount of privilege and plenty,” this memoir by a Pulitzer Prize-winning critic recounts her upbringing in mid-century Chicago, the second daughter of a pediatrician and a social worker turned homemaker. Jefferson combines memoir with cultural critique in a series of unsparing vignettes that describe the pressures of her childhood, her anxieties about success, and a struggle in early adulthood with suicidal depression. The book interrogates the African-American élite’s class-consciousness and its “hard-earned pride.” Internalizing the values of white America, the people Jefferson writes about know that they must be “impeccable but not arrogant; confident yet obliging; dignified, not intrusive.”



**A GUEST AT THE SHOOTERS' BANQUET**, by Rita Gabis (Bloomsbury). In this family history, the author investigates the role that her grandfather, a Lithuanian police chief who collaborated with the Germans during the Second World War, may have played in a two-day massacre of eight thousand Jews in 1941. Gabis, who is half-Jewish, is haunted by feelings of anger and shame as she conducts interviews with Holocaust survivors, searches archives, and prods her relatives to reexamine the past. At times, the emphasis on her need for answers can seem trivial in comparison with the horrific historical events. But the book is a powerful consideration of what happens when reality contradicts our belief “that those we love or have loved are good.”



**THE BAMBOO STALK**, by Saud Alsanousi, translated from the Arabic by Jonathan Wright (Bloomsbury). Born to a Kuwaiti man and a Filipino maid, the narrator of this novel grows up poor in the Philippines and arrives in Kuwait as a young man full of expectations. But to his father’s family he is a reminder of his parents’ misalliance, and he comes to realize that, because of his Asian looks, Kuwaitis assume that he is a migrant worker. Alsanousi’s absorbing subject is the reciprocal incuriosity of two populations: the migrants are treated as if they “have no feelings and don’t understand anything”; they, in turn, see Kuwaitis as either generous or abusive, while the narrator sees sensitive, ambitious members of a fast-changing society.



**THE WAY THINGS WERE**, by Aatish Taseer (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). In this novel of family and politics, a man named Skanda returns to India to bury the body of his father, a professor of Sanskrit who has died in Geneva. Encounters with family members spur recollections of the conflicts that dominated his childhood, from Indira Gandhi’s State of Emergency, in the mid-seventies, to the destruction of the Babri Mosque, in 1992. The political strife parallels fractures in Skanda’s family. His mother resents what she sees as her husband’s weakness during political crises. The Sanskrit language is a bond between father and son but a barrier between husband and wife. Taseer deftly presents both the family and India as captives of collective history.

concepts of class and *mentalité* onto what are, clearly, the inevitable inner squabbles of fan clubs and interest groups. Friss illustrates, without quite articulating, the central Trollopean social insight: like-minded people with similar passions typically end up fighting among themselves far more than they do with their class or intellectual opponents. Cyclists fight cyclists, as union leaders fight union leaders. To take one instance, Friss shows that the American biking community itself split, violently, in the eighteen-nineties, between those who were in favor of dedicated bike paths and those who mistrusted any segregation of the biker from the common highway.

Although Friss concedes that “bicycle mechanics became automobile mechanics” (as the Wright Brothers sprang from a bicycle shop into the air), he still insists that bikes were defeated not by cars but by a growing fear of the potentially radical effects, particularly on women, of the popular bicycle. The decline in cycling had to do with “its loss of social and cultural appeal,” Friss writes. “As more and more varieties of people began to ride, others no longer found bicycles so appealing.” Class panic, in this view, was central: “The smart set and their followers no longer found that their machines served as a social marker. The bicycle could not sustain itself as a fashionable social tool and also as a utilitarian tool.” Well, why not? Cars do. Bikes do again today, with sleek architects racing to their ateliers on the gearless kind and underpaid deliverymen pedalling through the rain with Chinese food. Scanting the obvious technological history, one can also overstate the determinisms of class warfare.

Surely many things, including bikes, fall in and out of fashion for reasons that have more to do with fashion than with reason. Hemlines do not rise and fall because of changing attitudes toward sexuality, unless attitudes toward sexuality change radically every five years. They rise because they had previously fallen and fall because they once rose. Fashion is not a subsidiary idea but itself an explanatory one. Any New York student of styles of transport and recreation will have seen,

for instance, the rise and fall of roller skates, a craze that claimed the cover of this magazine more than once in the nineteen-seventies, and its replacement by in-line skating, and then, eventually, the decline of both. All of this had less to do with changing social visions than with the inevitable pull of tides and time.

How much do the physical arrangements of cities—their alleys and streets, their transportation infrastructure—actually affect their character? The grid expresses something about a common New York ideal of busyness and intersection—mercantile capitalist order as a devouring Dionysian force—more than it enforces that ideal. The greatest celebrations of the grid are the émigré Piet Mondrian's two New York paintings: "Broadway Boogie Woogie" and "Victory Boogie Woogie." They are part of a forties-New York efflorescence, the blinking, stable, dynamic, and yet still rectilinear energy—an image of energy that breaks with the usual organic forms of ecstatic spirals and gyres. They show the grid as metaphor, and a metaphor, after all, is a cell with a view: the bars in the window bend, and you leave as, and when, you want to.

If city tales begin with grids and transportation, they end in ruins: there are no more moving or frightening images in urban history than those of contemporary Detroit. The photographs of Michigan Central Station now be-weeded, or of Mishkan Yisroel synagogue abandoned, are presented on the Internet as if Piranesian and romantic, until one recalls that this Rome fell not after five hundred years of Vandals and Christians but after a mere few decades of neglect and decay and social change. The journalist David Maraniss has written a book about the fall of Detroit, and done it, ingeniously, by writing about Detroit at its height, Humpty Dumpty's most poignant moment being just before he toppled over. Maraniss's "Once in a Great City" (Simon & Schuster) is an encyclopedic account of Detroit in the early sixties, a kind of hymn to what really was a great city. (Maraniss spent his early childhood in Detroit, and

its old monuments still have a child-like glow for him. I feel the same way about Philadelphia, a similar place with a similar fate and a happier rebound.)

Maraniss begins with twinned disasters that at the time no one saw as portents. In 1962, the Ford Rotunda, a now forgotten but formerly world-famous example of high-tech architecture, designed by the visionary modernist Albert Kahn—once one of the five leading tourist attractions in America—burned to the ground in an hour after a stupid roofing accident. The same day, another Kahn building, a model black-owned-and-operated hotel called the Gotham, was raided on charges of housing a gambling ring; it was shortly doomed to demolition, to make way for a parking garage, as much of black Detroit was being steamrolled for expressways. Both structures were monuments of civic optimism in their day, and their destruction dramatically illustrates all that could be lost.

We then meet a panorama of social players and types: from Berry Gordy, Jr., then emerging as a tycoon of rhythm, to Wilfred X, Malcolm's older brother, a significant character in the era and the town. The Motown chapters, to any lover of American music, are especially engrossing. Maraniss dramatizes one of the most compelling of all historical questions: How did a line of geniuses suddenly emerge in this one industrial town—Smokey Robinson and Marvin Gaye and Stevie Wonder and Holland-Dozier-Holland, and so many more that Aretha Franklin, across town, was snobbishly kept out of the line by her preacher father, who didn't want her to mingle with crass Motown? Was it because there was a local hit-making music business, or because there was, by serendipitous chance, a special gathering of geniuses? The obvious answer, that it was a little of both, is not that helpful, since we want to know how much of each, a question that applies equally to Florence in 1400. The art historian E. H. Gombrich, the best student of the process, once identified the central engine of such renaissances as in-group competition, and, indeed, the engine of Motown's genius seems to have been the morn-

ing meetings, when all the composers would have to go head to head and demo to demo, and the competitive level was so high that Gordy's sister Esther generally sided with Smokey over Berry.

We are also reintroduced to the man who ought to be on the twenty-dollar bill, the great Walter Reuther, the president and a founder (with his brother) of the United Auto Workers, tragically little remembered now, especially compared with the thug Jimmy Hoffa, who betrayed the labor movement to organized crime. We witness Reuther's heroic past—he was a social democrat who worked in the Soviet Union and denounced Stalinism; a labor leader who survived attempts by the owners not just to intimidate but to assassinate him—and his visionary nineteen-sixties present. He thought that auto-workers needed not only higher wages but less stressful work, and proposed regular sabbaticals for them, as for college professors.

We get a deservedly sympathetic portrait of Henry Ford II, who knew perfectly well what a louse his old man had been, fired the goons who had tried to kill Reuther and his brother, recognized the necessity of unions, and worked hard to accommodate their concerns. There are also some lovely and funny intertwinnings: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a saint but no fool, got into a squabble with Gordy over potential royalties for an LP of his "I Have a Dream" speech. (Maraniss notes that there were multiple "Dream" speeches—Gordy was ready to release the one delivered in Detroit, before the March on Washington, which Reuther helped organize.)

The display of municipal energies is so impressive that every page haunts us with the questions What went wrong? How could so much go so wrong so rapidly? How did a city of so many fruitful tensions and monuments and intermediary institutions turn into the ruins we see now, with scarcely a third of its 1950 population remaining and so many of the sites that Maraniss mentions ruined or destroyed? The answers, more hinted at than spelled out, are depressingly familiar: the riots of 1967 and the upward swoop of crime that dissolved

old neighborhoods and drove their residents to the suburbs; the separation of the suburbs as a tax base from the city that they depended on; and, above all, the simple and inexorable decline of Detroit as a manufacturing base, under the pressure of Asian competition. (It is exactly the historic arc of change that John Updike captured for all time in his “Rabbit” books.)

Reading about Maraniss’s Detroit in isolation, though, one would have only a vague idea that pretty much the same things happened in Gary and Buffalo and Cleveland and Camden—if Detroit got it worse, it was partly because it had it better. What’s more, the same thing (minus the gun violence, an American specialty) happened in the North of England. Liverpool (which also had a pop efflorescence), Manchester, and Leeds all saw similar depressions. Read the English novelist Keith Waterhouse on what downtown Leeds was like, splendid and civic, during his Yorkshire childhood in the forties, and the Detroit agony seems universal.

The rise in urban violence certainly played a decisive role in the American disaster. Maraniss details the first significant clash between police and citizens in the sixties, caused by the killing of a prostitute known as St. Cynthia, in recognizably muddled circumstances. The local community’s suspicion of the police was not assuaged by the possibility that in this particular case the police were not at fault, or by what Maraniss records as the genuinely good intentions of the recently appointed police commissioner. His book reminds us that amnesia about the effect of crime on middle-class voters is a dangerous narcotic for liberal politics. It was crime and the fear of violence, however paranoid or overstated, that impelled the rise of Richard Nixon, and of George Wallace, and fuelled the paranoia about cities that became a staple of the American political diet for decades. Maraniss shows us that periods of progressive politics—and one of the most heart-breaking things in his chronicle is the certainty, of Dr. King among others,

that Detroit was at the onset of an upward-moving arc—coincide not with periods of heightened despair but with periods of rising expectations. (Black Lives Matter rose under Obama because a reminder of residual bigotries met an increasing expectation of equality of treatment.) Walter Reuther was well to the left of Bernie Sanders, but he understood that his union needed a better Ford, in both senses. The U.A.W. could get more power for itself and benefits for its members when there was more to share. Someone once called anti-Semitism the socialism of fools, meaning that imagining that Jewish financiers were responsible for inequality was a half-witted way of explaining it. Sentimentality about urban violence is the progressivism of fools, a half-witted insistence that the American middle class, itself plagued by economic insecurities, is more likely to pay tender attention to cities if they are made unlivable.

**G**ranting that what looks peculiar to a place usually turns out to be endemic to a kind, has anyone found a cure for the common modern urban ills? The two best books about American cities—Reyner Banham’s on Los Angeles and Jane Jacobs’s “The Death and Life of Great American Cities,” which is essentially about New York—share an oddly double-headed ideology. Both Banham and Jacobs believe in unplanned, organic, emergent cities. Banham’s ecstatic expressway is an expression of L.A.’s endless appetite for elsewhere; Jacobs’s beloved street corner expresses New York’s nightly celebration of community. Their ideas are conservative and bottom up, in one sense, but also progressive and top down, inasmuch as both writers believe that intelligent government decisions create the places where the unplanned can happen. The expressway is Jacobs’s enemy and Banham’s friend, but they both know that expressways are not self-made. So there is a kind of tension in the way they describe the cities they love, and that tension may be built into what cities are: highly organized and planned—gridded and gated—yet unpredictable in their unfolding pattern.

What we need, obviously, and find



*“What did we promise Mommy about leaving our rejected manuscripts and empty bourbon bottles on the stairs?”*

hard to make, are stable pots and beautiful flowers, good plans producing open forms. We mourn the small stores lost and the neighborhood neutered, even as we recognize that cities depend for their future on new ways of selling and buying and living. Cities often produce whatever the next wave of social change is going to be, and then violently reject it for altering the nature of the city. The tech kids clustering in San Francisco depend on the special virtues of the old San Francisco—contiguity, character, charm—which they cannot help but diminish. The old city recoils, even as it is, inevitably, remade. As city people, we are our own pathogens and our own patients.

Can we be our own doctors, too? Certainly, the chief way that cities have renewed and restored themselves in recent times is through the process that has the ill-given name of gentrification—ill-given because it is dehumanizing to fix under the label “gentrify” the mixture of social types who reenter the urban arena, ranging from real-estate keeners to young gay couples to painters seeking space, just as it is to label a similar mixture of social types an “underclass.” (And the gentrify are, often enough, the ambitious locals, as in Harlem, where Calvin Butts’s Abyssinian Baptist Church is the single most potent agent of change.) D. W. Gibson’s “The Edge Becomes the Center: An Oral History of Gentrification in the Twenty-first Century” is a fair example of how the topic often gets treated. The book’s aim is

to highlight the voices of the dispossessed and the often rightly aggrieved, with one meek lawyer there to say that the High Line has become that scam. The problem, Gibson suggests, is with property itself; reading a pamphlet titled “Squatting in New York City,” he’s captivated by the phrase “the sin of property.” (Proudhon thought it merely theft; the Catholic imprecation is newer.) This is odd for someone who presumably wishes to preserve the New York City that immigrants built and loved. They did not believe that property was sin. They believed that property was salvation—that a small house or a corner store was the path out of immigrant poverty. At the end, Gibson holds out the fear that New York may yet become Detroit, but the truth is that stagnation strikes cities in many ways, and that the homogeneity that threatens New York is entirely a problem of unexpected civic success—too many people from too many places chasing too little property—not, as in Detroit, a civic failure so large that it causes the government, in effect, to give property away.

Cities change. It is their nature. Those which stop changing stop being cities. Cities that change entirely, though, cease to be themselves. If there are sane grounds for hope, they lie in how resilient the social capital accumulated in cities turns out to be. Detroit today is, all agree who work there, a harsh place, haunted by the past, but one with real civic resources that are being called on for its renewal. The clashes between local people and

new arrivals, in inner-city Detroit as elsewhere, are real, and a fit subject for a novel or a film or a real oral history; but they are not poisonous or intractable.

If there is one book that might fill your heart with small but reasonable hope about the possibility of rebuilding social capital through civic instruction—in reinforcing organic community with social engineering—it is a 2008 study of dog shit. “New York’s Poop Scoop Law,” by Michael Brandow, tells the story of the Koch-era initiative to make people pick up after their dogs. We forget now that, while crime raged on the streets, dog shit lay beneath the feet of muggers and victims alike. Brandow is a dog lover, who, for much of his book, sneers at the absurdity of the law and at those who protect trees instead of accepting dogs, only to confess that, on the whole, it has worked wonderfully well. A combination of, so to speak, ground-up enterprise—citizens’ groups demanding cleaner streets—intelligent legislation, and a surprising surge of civic goodwill made into a durable social convention a law that most thought would be unenforceable or neglected. It arose from a perfect interaction of laws and manners, top-down instruction and bottom-up consensus. Civic groups acting to save their city inspired politicians to pass intelligent laws, and the laws became traditions so entrenched that no one now walks his poodle without a plastic bag. The streets of the city may not be paved with gold. But they are clean of dog poop. It’s a start. ♦

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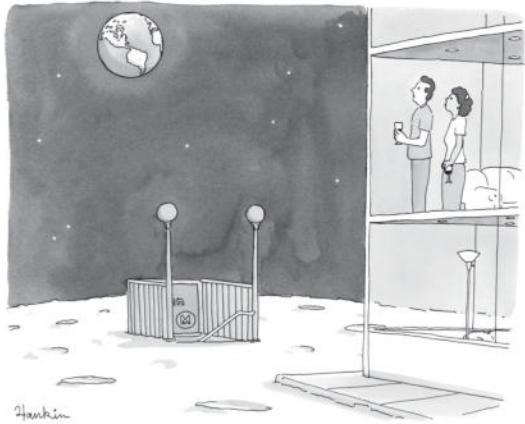
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## CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Liam Francis Walsh, must be received by Sunday, October 4th. The finalists in the September 21st contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the October 19th issue. The winner receives a signed print of the cartoon. Any resident of the United States, Canada (except Quebec), Australia, the United Kingdom, or the Republic of Ireland age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit [contest.newyorker.com](http://contest.newyorker.com).

### THE WINNING CAPTION



"They did say ocean views."  
Rachel Perlman, New York City



### THE FINALISTS

"Your sins are forgiven, but not your co-pay."  
Arthur Silverman, Frederick, Md.

"We tend to pick up quite a few converts in here."  
Debra Doonan, Caledonia, Miss.

"You're covered under His plan."  
Christopher Pearson, Atlanta, Ga.

### THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



" " "

# What did one lizard say to the other?



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A dramatic underwater scene. A man in a light blue button-down shirt and jeans is swimming upwards, his arms extended forward and back. He is reaching for a woman's hand that is visible from above, coming down towards him. The water is a deep, clear blue, and sunlight filters down from the surface, creating bright highlights on the water's surface and the swimmers.

Begin again.

# the leftovers

SEASON PREMIERE  
OCTOBER 4, 9PM **HBO**  
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